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**WHAT THE NKOMATI  
ACCORD MEANS FOR  
AFRICA**

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## **THE AFRICAN COMMUNIST**

*Published quarterly in the interests of African solidarity, and as a forum for Marxist-Leninist thought throughout our Continent, by the South African Communist Party*

**No 98 Third Quarter 1984**

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## **EDITORIAL NOTES**

# **WHAT THE NKOMATI ACCORD MEANS FOR AFRICA**

Once again we are reminded that the future cannot be foretold. Who could have studied the political developments of Southern Africa only one year ago, and foretold the events of the past months? Which analyst would have been bold enough to foretell that in April 1984, the Mozambican government, headed by the Frelimo party, would be deporting the cadres of the South African revolutionary movement from their country? Or raiding ANC homes and offices in Maputo, under the supervisory eye of a joint Mozambican-South African commission?

Yet these, and other actions of a similar kind, are all the consequences of South Africa's foreign policy, whose general lines were in evidence over a year ago but whose detailed working out is only now becoming apparent. The ANC presence in Mozambique has been reduced from a substantial working cadre to a "diplomatic mission" only of 10 approved members, with the President and one or two others having the right of entry. All other ANC cadres are being deported, or restricted to refugee camps to which the

ANC leadership will be denied access. And at the frontiers, Mozambique's troops "... exercise ... rigorous control over elements proposing to carry out or plan" hostile actions against the apartheid state. The so-called Nkomati Accord, entered into between Mozambique and South Africa at the town of Komatipoort on 16th March this year, made provision for all this, and more.

In the propaganda gloss put upon this Accord by the South African and world press, there is constant reference to the liquidation of ANC and Umkhonto "armed bases"; but in fact, as South Africa well knows, there are not and have never been any such bases in Mozambique.

Yet the South African regime's propagandists — from Premier Botha to Defence Minister Magnus Malan and all their lick-spittle radio and press commentators — portray the Accord as a "triumph" over threats of armed ANC incursion into the country from across its borders. This travesty of the truth serves two purposes. It serves as a smokescreen to hide from South Africans themselves the patent fact that the growing Umkhonto armed and sabotage attacks within the country originate from within the country, far from its heavily patrolled borders. And it serves as a smokescreen to obscure the hostility of the Botha regime to the social and economic policies of what have become known as the frontline states.

### **Rough Treatment**

The real nature of that hostility lies heavily camouflaged by the apparently reciprocal nature of the Nkomati Accord. As quid-pro-quo for all that the Mozambican government has undertaken to do, South Africa reciprocally undertakes to prevent hostile broadcasting from its territories, and to end aid and assistance to anti-Frelimo armed forces in Mozambique. On paper, it all appears eminently equal and reasonable. But the test of the fairness and equality of such an Accord is not to be made on the paper it is written on, but on the ground of actual political operations.

Here already there are the gravest signals that all is not what it might seem on paper. Already since the Accord, there have been new and savage assaults launched inside Mozambique by counter-revolutionary mercenaries of the MNR, who everyone knows and admits to be the running dogs of South African foreign policy, trained, paid for, equipped and directed from South Africa. There is nothing in South Africa's past history of relations with its black neighbours to give any confidence that its post-Accord policy will be anything more than the continuation of the pre-Accord policy, only differently wrapped to suit a new advertising campaign.

What was the pre-Accord policy? We are told by the South African propaganda machine that its policy towards the frontline states generally is to seek friendly co-operation; that towards Mozambique particularly, it has been concerned only with attacks on ANC-Umkhonto camps and bases to prevent armed revolutionary incursions into South Africa from across its borders. If this is so, why did its MNR running dogs then not attack ANC personnel and positions, rather than the important Mozambican industrial, economic and transport installations which have been its main targets? The MNR was — perhaps still is — South Africa's surrogate in Mozambique. Its purposes and aims are South Africa's purposes and aims. And those purposes were never to counter the ANC's revolutionary efforts against apartheid, but always to undermine the Frelimo government and its efforts to reconstruct and develop Mozambique. Only the most naive will believe that because the ANC presence in Mozambique is now severely reduced the South African policy of undermining the Frelimo government's policy and future has been cancelled.

Such long-term considerations as these cannot be allowed to be glossed over in consideration only of the important but essentially short-term problems thrown up by the Nkomati Accord. Neither South African nor Mozambican policy can be accepted as short-term, temporary expedients, to cope with the imagined threat of the ANC incursion across the Mozambique-South Africa frontier. It can do no good for revolutionaries of either country to pretend that yesterday's running sore has been cured by agreement. Perhaps a sticking-plaster has been applied to the wound, but underneath the old sources of South African infection remain.

*South Africa's apartheid regime lies at the core of the cancer; it promotes discontent and revolutionary upheaval at home, which it seeks to contain by a combination of police-state terror and corruption of a black elite; it promotes conflict and upheaval outside in all the frontline states, to roll back the tide of independence and to reassert a new era of colonial-type economic and political dependence.*

The frontline states correctly understood their real situation when they created a *cordon sanitaire* of isolation around South Africa. The Nkomati Accord marks the breaking of that *cordon*. The Botha regime now feels more confident that it can spread the infection of apartheid and neo-colonialism more easily through Africa. The invitation to Premier Botha to visit a number of European states shows that his allies are of the same opinion.

### **The International Dimension**

The Nkomati Accord though ostensibly a Mozambican-South African affair, does not occur in isolation from the whole international dimension, which



includes repeated armed incursions into Angola, the attempted Muzorewa putsch and subsequent internal destabilisation of Zimbabwe, the suborning of the Swaziland ruling authority, military incursion and counter-revolutionary sabotage in Lesotho, military rapine and conscription of Namibia, and so on. All these many facets of South Africa's overt and covert operations in all the neighbouring territories constitute the reality of its consistent foreign policy and programme.

It is customary in South Africa, and elsewhere in the capitalist world, to present that policy as a native product of South Africa alone; and to present the Nkomati Accord as the greatest triumph of that South African policy, and a vindication of the so-called "new direction" in which P.W. Botha is said to be leading the apartheid state. The truth, however, is not that simple. The Nkomati Accord may have been hatched in Pretoria, but the strategy behind it has been produced in Washington.

Washington, before Reagan but more particularly since Reagan's presidency, has had a simplistic view of the world, and an equally simplistic view of Africa. In that simplistic view, every dispute or division in the world can be satisfactorily viewed as a conflict between 'good and evil' — or, in interchangeable terms of Washington-speak, as anti-Communist versus Communist. There are no shades in between.

Everywhere — but especially in Africa — every non-aligned state which does not concede knee-jerk obedience to US policy is seen from Washington as a "puppet of Moscow." Every anti-imperialist and popular liberation movement is understood to be a "front for communism". Washington, as leader of the imperialist alliance of Western states, has devised what it deems an appropriate strategy for dealing with the world. It has been described by Reagan himself as "... rolling back the frontiers of communism."

That strategy has been followed relentlessly, world-wide. Every weapon in the American arsenal — money, control of world markets, leadership of international agencies for development — all have been allied to the world-wide network of CIA agents of subversion. In total, these weapons add up to international terrorism; its purposes are to strangle national economies of independent states, to disrupt their links with their allies and the rest of the world, to purchase internal subversion and sabotage, to arm counter-revolution, and finally — when all else fails — to set the scene for direct US military intervention against sovereign independent states. Internal terrorism has been let loose everywhere — to overthrow a disliked regime in Nicaragua, just as they had done previously in Guatemala and Chile; to finance wars as in Lebanon, Afghanistan and Kampuchea; to bolster

reactionary regimes and finance death squads as in El Salvador. It has supplanted international diplomacy as a way of dealing with nations, especially wherever peoples of the under-developed world choose to form their own governments and plan their own economic ways forward out of poverty.

Africa — and Southern Africa — are not exceptions to the global strategy. Where there are client states, pliable enough or venal enough to serve US aims — as in Botha's South Africa or Smith's Rhodesia — there has been US aid and support for regimes which maintain themselves through police-state terror and oppression of black majorities. UDI has been acceptable; illegal occupation and military dictatorship of Namibia have been acceptable; armed invasion of Angola and internal subversion by military means of Mozambique have been acceptable. All conform to the grand strategy of "rolling back the frontiers of communism" as seen from Washington, and recreating a continent which will once again be a docile cog in the world of free enterprise and the pursuit of private profit. The hand on the Nkomati Accord and in the many facets of destabilisation of the frontline states may be South African. But the policy and strategy are those of the US. Everywhere, in the recent events in Southern Africa, the shadowy figure of the US special agent Chester Crocker can be discerned as the controller, mostly offstage.

### **The Southern African Dimension**

US-led international terrorism has been in evidence in all the frontline states as their peoples seek desperately to break out of their colonial pasts, to throw off their shackles of former dependence and colonial-style poverty. Nowhere has terrorism operated as openly and fiercely as in Angola and Mozambique — the two countries of the area where the way forward has been proclaimed most clearly to be the building of socialist society. In many parts of Africa, and elsewhere, there has been lip-service paid to the aim of "socialism", often merely as a slogan. But here, in Angola and Mozambique, the perspective of socialism has been based on programmes of social reconstruction presented explicitly in terms of Marxist theory, headed by parties which declared their aim to mobilise according to Marxist doctrine to create their own destinies. These two countries were thus seen simultaneously as the main standard-bearers of socialism in Southern Africa, and in consequence the main targets of the US-led terror.

All the weapons of the arsenal have been used against them; economic isolation and strangulation; diplomatic isolation; fomenting of internal armed subversion, and mounting of external armed invasion. World

markets have been manipulated to produce rising prices of essential imports of machine-tools and manufactured goods at the same time as falling prices of vital exports of raw materials; 'development' aid has been slanted towards schemes based on capital-intensive processes and high technology which undermine the traditional economies and their accompanying social orders.

Yet despite it all — and despite the cruel circumstances of one of the worst and most prolonged droughts of recent times — despite it all, it must be remembered that neither Angola nor Mozambique have fallen, as Ghana's socialism under Nkrumah or Zaire's under Lumumba fell. For radicals and revolutionaries everywhere this is a most important aspect of the present time in the area — not that Mozambique has been brought by *force majeure* to sign a scarcely creditable Accord; but that its government has survived and is still proclaiming adherence to socialism.

It is argued forcibly by many of Frelimo's friends that the combined weight of drought and foreign terrorism had brought Mozambique to the point where the stark choice was between the Nkomati Accord and total collapse.

Perhaps so. But that is not a judgement that any of us in the South African liberation movement should seek to make on their behalf, any more than we could accept the right of others to make their own independent judgements about what is best for us in our own country. If our comrades in Frelimo judged their situation in their country in this way, we must take note of that judgement. If they concluded that *force majeure* had left them with no alternatives between the collapse of their revolution and a reduction of our facilities in their country, that too we have to take note of, much though we regret it.

But there are judgements of a different sort which arise from the Nkomati Accord which are not the province of our Frelimo comrades alone. It is being said in some quarters, for example, that now that the Nkomati Accord has been reached, the appetites of the US and South Africa in that part of the world have been satisfied; that therefore the international terrorist actions against Mozambique are at an end. And, by way of extrapolation from that: that if other frontline states also enter into similar — though regrettable — accords with South Africa, they too will have appeased their enemy and created peace for themselves in which to pursue their aims of national development and independence.

We do not agree. The harassment of the ANC, which is the ostensible centrepiece of the Nkomati Accord, is nothing more than a single piece in the whole global strategy of "rolling back" the frontiers of national independence and economic independence. Other and more severe



pressures will certainly follow — for Mozambique, for Angola, and for all others; the full terrorist arsenal will still be used, excluding nothing. The pressures will not end until either the South African government itself is overthrown, or the independent governments have been overthrown, and their people brought back into subservience with dependent economies tailored to fit the world-wide net of imperialist relations of inequality. The Nkomati Accord is not a peace signal for Africa. *It is, in our view, the fore-runner of worse pressures, worse aggressions to come, for all the frontline states. And it should be a warning to them all to prepare!*

### **The South African Dimension**

No one has felt the immediate post-Nkomati increase of imperialist and reactionary pressure more sharply than our own South African liberation movement, headed by the ANC and supported by all the main popular and patriotic forces and organisations at home and abroad, including this journal and the South African Communist Party. Our position in regard to the Nkomati Accord is unique, not directly shared by others in the front line. Premier Botha undoubtedly hopes that the Accord will destroy our movement and our challenge to apartheid; undermining the frontline states is only one aspect of it as far as he is concerned.

It is we South African revolutionaries who are at the centre of the Accord and its main target. Yet it is we, uniquely, who are not a party to the discussions, not asked whether any accord is possible; not asked even to talk about a treaty whose subject is, after all, ourselves: *us; our country; our people; our future.*

And just because we and *our* revolutionary movement are at the centre of the Nkomati Accord, it is *our* movement and *our* people who are most directly affected by it, and who feel its most immediate consequences. No one could possibly pretend that the Accord has not adversely affected our freedom to operate. Of all the valuable acts of international aid our movement has received from many countries, the facilities accorded to us by Mozambique in the past have been amongst the most important. Now these facilities have been severely restricted, in some spheres totally withdrawn.

But of themselves, they do not demand of us any new policies. It was never our strategy to seek to conduct the struggle of our country's liberation from outside its borders. Activity outside our borders was forced upon us, unwillingly, in the worst period of our movement's decimation in the early 1960's. After the period of the Rivonia trial and the mass arrests, imprisonments and torture of our militants, our movement had been



brought close to ineffectiveness. Had it remained totally restricted to work only within the country, it was our judgement then that it might well be totally extinguished. It was decided to commence the building of an apparatus outside the country, to take on the task of rebuilding an organisation out of the remnants of the wreckage — an organisation which would once again function within our country but with fraternal assistance and support of personnel and organisation abroad.

### **The Way Back Home**

That central strategy has never altered. The ANC leadership outside South Africa, like the Communist Party leadership, has never seen itself as permanently in exile. It has always seen itself as a temporary caretaker for the movement which had to be rebuilt, regrouped and re-established at home. That the task of rebuilding would never be easy was always understood by those who had experienced for themselves the reality of operating a revolutionary force within the terror of the South African apartheid state. It has been underway for over twenty years. And though it is still not a task that can be said to be complete, it has achieved signal success.

Within South Africa today, every aspect of our people's struggle contrasts sharply with the bleak days of 1960. Today there is everywhere widespread readiness for struggle, which flares up repeatedly in a myriad of local actions by workers, peasants, squatters, students, house-holders, professionals and politicians. Everywhere, on a local level, there are respected and trusted local spokesmen and leaders, together with local organisations who fill the vacuum created by the 1960 setbacks. And there is now the evidence everywhere of the existence of an armed force of guerillas, freedom fighters, operating within the country and surviving amongst the people “.. like fish in water”

This is not to claim that every mass popular resistance to the regime in township or factory is organised by the ANC. Far from it. But the ANC presence is there, everywhere; its influence and reputation, upheld and spread by the external leadership, give coherence, unity and self-confidence to every popular movement. To this extent, the external ANC leadership has fulfilled a large part of its task — the essential part — of sponsoring the spirit of mass resistance amongst the people, without which there can be no safe basis for a rebuilt organisation. And the SACP has played its full part in all this.

Now, for sure, the basis is there for rebuilt revolutionary organisations, underground and yet ubiquitous within South Africa. Whether, or in what

strength such organisations have in fact been built already, is not something that can possibly be discussed in such a forum as this. But certainly the objective circumstances are there. And so the external leadership has done what it set out to do — in part at least. It has created the conditions for a return of the organisations and their leadership to South Africa. It has fought a way back, via propaganda and underground organisation; and it has fought a way back via foreign training and cross-border return of the armed forerunners of the peoples' liberation forces.

Our organisations have had over twenty years' hospitality in the frontline states to make this possible. If the curtailment of facilities in Mozambique is to have any long-term influence on our movement, it will be simply to lend urgency to the pace of this process of fighting our way back into the country; and thus to expedite the date at which an internal revolutionary leadership is once again established — this time securely surrounded by an armed cadre and an aroused and supportive population. The difficulties for us arising from the Nkomati Accord are short term; the challenging opportunities long term.

### **Facing The Future**

For in South Africa's freedom struggle, then, there is now intense pressure to meet the long-term challenge and re-establish the centres of our movement clearly within the borders of South Africa. It is a formidable challenge; but not more formidable than that faced in 1960 — and accomplished — of resurrecting our movement from the ashes of defeat.

For all the frontline states too there are formidable challenges. All are now being subjected to the international terrorism which finally brought the government of Mozambique to Komatipoort, with the aim of finally forcing each of them in turn to sign an Nkomati-style agreement.

But the main issue, as we argued above about Mozambique, is not the signing of an agreement itself, even though such an agreement may seriously handicap the South African freedom struggle. The fundamental issue is what will happen thereafter; and thereafter. For a containment of the ANC is not a final strategy of the US-South African axis. The "rolling back the frontiers" of national liberty and independence, of economic independence and of self-sufficient nationhood, is. Against that strategy, will any frontline state ultimately be able to hold fast to its chosen course towards its own future? This is the main question of Southern Africa at the moment. It is the overriding question Southern Africa needs to solve for itself, before which all the other manifold problems of the region must take second place.

The equation for holding out looks improbable. Against the vast financial, economic, technical and military resources of the aggressor can be arrayed only the spirit of independence and the still feeble economies and armies of the victims. If this were all to the equation, there would seem to be only one answer.

But this is not the whole story, for no people fighting against racism and imperialism should think of themselves as fighting alone, naked and unprotected against a more powerful foe. History has shown again and again that, despite the seeming disparity between contending forces, the outcome cannot be precisely predicted by counting numbers. Who would have foretold the military triumph of puny, underdeveloped Vietnam over the military strength first of the French empire, then of the United States? Or the political and social survival of the people's struggles in El Salvador and Nicaragua against improbable odds? The future is not fore-ordained. It depends finally on the perspectives and courage of peoples, on their ideology, strategy and tactics, on their decisions and their unity and determination in carrying them out, on the strengthening of the bonds between all the anti-imperialist forces everywhere, and perhaps above all, on strengthening the links between the forces of national liberation and national independence and the mighty bloc of the socialist countries with the Soviet Union as its heartland.

These are the perspectives which must be considered by the peoples of Southern Africa in deciding what must be done to halt the racist and imperialist juggernaut. It is not for us, in this journal, to dictate the details of strategy to the South African liberation movement, and even less to the frontline states. But we can put forward, and we do so here, some ideas for consideration, in the hope that they will eliminate pessimism and raise the prospect of successful resistance to the axis of enemy forces.

There are acceptable alternatives to the strategies incorporated in the Nkomati Accord. We must remember that if the position of Angola differs from that of Mozambique, it may be due in part to the substantial support and underpinning from fraternal Cuba, plus the warning from the Soviet Union that South Africa would simply not be allowed to occupy Luanda. For various reasons that deserve analysis, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Lesotho have so far resisted the South African pressure. But in the end there is, in our view, only one realistic strategy for Southern African independence to survive, and that is in long-term co-operation and unity of the national and international forces opposed to racism and imperialism, and ready to act against the aggression the enemy has unleashed in southern Africa.

One of the tragedies of today's dilemma is that Mozambique signed the Nkomati Accord without adequate consultation with all the parties concerned. It appeared to be an individual decision reached unilaterally. If that is to be the pattern for the future, then there is no doubt that enemies of the apartheid regime will be knocked off one by one. They truly either stand together or they will go under individually. One of the most encouraging developments since the Nkomati Accord was signed was the unanimity reached at the meeting of the frontline states attended also by the ANC and SWAPO at Arusha towards the end of April.

### **Revolutionary Perspectives**

The strength of the front line against imperialism in Southern Africa would be greatly enhanced and the balance of forces substantially altered if the revolutionary struggle of the South African people were advanced much further, requiring the whole of the apartheid regime's military and economic resources to be concentrated at home. The balance of forces not only in Southern Africa but in the whole of Africa and indeed the world would be fundamentally altered if the South African revolution were to succeed in its aims and overthrow the apartheid state.

Here indeed lies the prospect of a real future for all Southern Africa's peoples. But it depends on the advance of the South African freedom struggle and the emergence of a new people's South Africa — socialist-oriented South Africa — to lend its weight, moral and material, to the frontline alliance. Here alone, in our view, lies the real security of the region, and the only way finally to secure its future against the "rolling back" inroads of imperialism.

It is a simple and obvious conclusion to which this leads: namely that our South African revolutionary movement needs the steadfast resistance of the frontline states in order also to facilitate our own work; but even more do the frontline states themselves need the advance and growth of *our* revolutionary movement to ensure their own independent future. In addition, the anti-imperialist forces of South Africa and the frontline states need to strengthen their ties with the world-wide association of anti-imperialist forces, above all the socialist countries. And it is to be hoped in turn that the world anti-imperialist forces and the socialist states will be able to increase their support of the peoples of Southern Africa to help them to withstand the destabilising pressures and outright terrorism of the racists and imperialists.

Southern Africa is now, more than ever, interdependent. And the people of South Africa, represented by our liberation movement, are now more than ever to be seen as a vital part of that interdependence. We cannot acquiesce



in the surrender of any part of Africa to the enemy. Everything must be done by the progressive forces of all countries to strengthen the ability of Africa to resist the counter-revolutionary pressure of the racists and imperialists, to build up the economies of the independent African states, to raise the living standards of their peoples.

Let us in South Africa accept the challenge thrown down by the Nkomati Accord by consolidating and extending the revolutionary process at home. We can always be sure that our own people, whose struggle nourishes the roots of our liberation movement, can never let us down.

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## **ANTI-COMMUNISM AND ANTI-SOVIETISM PAVE THE WAY FOR FASCISM AND WAR**

The great Bulgarian Communist leader Georgi Dimitrov, while secretary general of the Communist International, wrote in 1939, in the course of the world-wide campaign to build a united front against fascism and war:

“Under the present international circumstances there is not and there cannot be any other more genuine criterion for distinguishing between a friend and any enemy to the cause of the working class and socialism, between a supporter and an opponent of democracy and peace than the attitude towards the Soviet Union. The touchstone for testing the sincerity and honesty of each member of the working class movement, of each workers’ party and organisation of the working people, of each democrat in the capitalist countries, is their attitude towards the great country of socialism. It is impossible to fight in practice against fascism if one does not help by all available means the consolidation of the most important bulwark in this fight, the Soviet Union.

“There is no possible serious struggle against the fascist instigators of a new world war if there is not unreserved support for the Soviet Union, the most significant factor in the preservation of international peace. It is practically impossible to fight for the just cause of socialism in one’s own country, if one does not fight against the enemies of the Soviet state where socialism is being realised through the heroic efforts of the working people”.

These words were written in 1939, on the eve of the outbreak of the second world war, and their truth was demonstrated by the experiences of the war itself. It was the refusal of the western powers to accept the Soviet Union’s peace proposals — on disarmament, on the fascist threat to Spain, Czechoslovakia, Poland — which made the outbreak of war inevitable. And the war itself demonstrated that without the contribution of the Soviet Union fascism could not have been defeated and peace secured. If not for the Soviet

Union, the peoples of the world might all today be living under the Nazi jackboot, subjects and victims of the herrenvolk.

It was anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism which led to the holocaust of the second world war and the loss of 50 million lives. It is the anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism at the heart of western policies today which once again threatens world peace, and in whose name democracy, freedom and independence of peoples are being undermined and destroyed. Just as the western powers built up Hitler's war machine in the hope that it would destroy the Soviet Union, the home of real socialism and an inspiration for oppressed peoples everywhere, so today the imperialists are supporting reactionary regimes and movements throughout the world, and threatening to launch nuclear war, in their desperate bid to prevent social change which would imperil the future of the capitalist system. When President Reagan called the Soviet Union "the source of all evil", he was paying his own tribute to the Soviet Union as the main bulwark of the forces fighting for liberation from the yoke of imperialism and neo-colonialism. At the same time Reagan was making it clear that he regards all movements of liberation and social reform as agents of Moscow, suitable targets for destabilisation and destruction. Hence the whole drift of US policy in Central America, the Middle East and Southern Africa. Hence the US embrace of mass murderers like Pinochet and Pol Pot. Hence the US invasion of Grenada. Hence US support for Israel and "constructive engagement" with the murderous Botha regime in our own South Africa.

### **Defence White Paper**

The White Paper tabled in the House of Assembly in Cape Town last April by Defence Minister Magnus Malan is a perfect example of the way in which anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism are utilised to justify the destabilisation and destruction of the freedom and independence of the frontline states, not to mention the ANC and SWAPO and all those actively engaged in the struggle against apartheid. It was South Africa's aggression against the frontline states which laid the foundation for the current "peace initiative", said the White Paper:

"Forceful military action by the South African Security Forces during the last decade or more has provided sufficient time to allow Africa to experience the dangers of Russian involvement in their countries, as well as the suffering and retrogression that follows upon the revolutionary formula".

During the decade, said the White Paper, many of South Africa's neighbours had "come to their senses and have had their eyes opened to the dangers of Russian imperialism".

The breathtaking impudence of this declaration is almost beyond belief. It is not the Soviet Union but racist South Africa and the western capitalist countries whose investment and trade dominate the economies of the frontline states. It is not the "Russians" but the racists who have been responsible for atrocities like the Kassinga massacre and the repeated invasions of Angola, the Koevoet murders in Namibia, the raids and killings in Maseru and Matola.

The White Paper declares: "Discussion and co-operation remains a better choice than terrorism, hostility or subversion". Yet it is the racist Botha-Malan regime which has undertaken more than a decade of terrorism and subversion, euphemistically referred to as "forceful military action", and which refuses to enter into discussion with the ANC. Not only the UN and the OAU but also "several churches, church leaders and church organisations" in South Africa and abroad are accused of "furthering USSR objectives in Southern Africa" by joining the propaganda onslaught against the Republic of South Africa. The White Paper maintains that it is the Soviet Union, acting through its agents the ANC and SWAPO, that is to blame for all the "social and labour unrest" in South Africa.

Thus anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism are used as a cloak to conceal the responsibility of the racists and the imperialists for the horrific situation in South Africa, where the majority of the population whose skins are not white are subjected to endless discrimination, deprivation and oppression, and banned, banished, jailed or executed if they dare to defend themselves and demand their rights. Defence Minister Malan's increase of his military budget by 21.4% to a record R3,755 million glaringly demonstrates his lack of confidence in the regime's willingness to engage in meaningful "discussion and co-operation" instead of bloodshed.

South Africa is of course not the only country in Africa (or the world) where anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism are resorted to by the regime to justify internal repression. Yet it is noteworthy that General Malan and his counterparts continually raise the spectre of "Russian expansionism" without feeling it necessary to produce any evidence that it exists; they know it is a formula that will go down well with the Reagan administration, who have it on the brain, and who are ready to pour out dollars by the million to prop up regimes whose leaders proclaim fervently that they would rather be dead than red.

To return to the Dimitrov doctrine: hostility, or even neutrality, towards the Soviet Union and the other countries of existing socialism can only undermine the struggle for national liberation, peace and social progress in

South Africa, Africa and the world. The enemy of our enemy is our friend, not for opportunistic reasons, but because Soviet policies have been firmly rooted in the principles of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism. Ever since 1917 the Soviet Union has shown itself to be the most consistent ally in the struggle against imperialism, for national independence, peace and social progress. At a time when the racists and imperialists are leaving no stone unturned to destabilise the socialist bloc and destroy the monumental achievements of the October Revolution, it is the duty of all genuine revolutionaries to make it unmistakably clear that they have the correct attitude towards the Soviet Union and are ready to come to its defence.

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## **OUR GENERAL SECRETARY HONOURED**

On April 6, 1984, the President of Bulgaria Todor Zhivkov bestowed on the general secretary of the South African Communist Party Moses Mabhida the Order of the People's Republic of Bulgaria 1st Class. The Order had been awarded to mark Comrade Mabhida's 60th birthday on October 14, 1983, but the presentation had been delayed because circumstances had made it impossible for Comrade Mabhida to visit Bulgaria earlier.

President Zhivkov pinned the medal on Comrade Mabhida's chest at a glittering ceremony in Sofia in the presence of members of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party, and the whole event was seen by millions on Bulgarian television.

In his speech of acceptance, Comrade Mabhida said: "In accepting the Order, allow me, dear comrades, to assure you that in the struggle for peace, for the unity of the International Communist Movement, for the defence of human dignity in which the Communist Party of Bulgaria is involved, our Party, the South African Communist Party, will always be at your side. Together with you we will continue to fight for all that is connected with the future of mankind, for Socialism".



# **THE NATIONAL QUESTION AND ETHNICITY**

## **The Case of the United Democratic Front and the National Forum**

**By Nyawuza**

The formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in mid-1983 was a sign that indicated a new level of organisation. This was not simply a response to a call for unity: it was a culmination of the development of organisations and the need to coordinate isolated struggles into broader forms of national campaigns and resistance.

The period after the Soweto uprising witnessed successful campaigns which were a reflection of the inexhaustible people's strength. In 1976 the dummy Soweto Urban Bantu Council was forced to resign. So, too, was the Coloured Labour Party forced to resign from the dummy Coloured Representative Council. In 1977 an active boycott organised against the election of the dummy Soweto Urban Bantu Council resulted in a 6 per cent poll, and in 1981 another active boycott against the dummy South African Indian Council resulted in a less than 10 per cent poll. This is to say nothing of the strikes, the struggles on the church front, the school boycotts and women's resistance.

At the same time there developed another trend which led to the formation of the National Forum. These developments — the emergence of the UDF and the National Forum — have been widely commented upon in the South African press and this essay is an evaluation and assessment of the two trends in the light of the ongoing struggle inside the country.

It is worth remembering that the emergence of contradictory and even antagonistic trends and tendencies is not a new phenomenon in the liberation struggle in South Africa. It is as old as the struggle itself. What is of interest in these trends is their direction and how the participants visualise solving the national question, for the essence of the national question at this stage of struggle is the national liberation of the Africans and all other nationally oppressed ethnic groups.

### **The Points of Departure**

It was at the annual congress of the Transvaal Anti-South African Indian Council Committee in January, 1983, that Dr Allan Boesak, president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, made a call for the formation of the UDF. At the same congress a decision was made to revive the Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC). It is worth noting that the decision to revive the TIC was proposed by an old member, R. Parakh, and supported by two African trade union leaders, Thozamile Gqwetha, president of the South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU), and Samson Ndou, president of the General and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU).

This decision to revive the TIC was condemned by the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo) as "one calculated to strengthen the forces of ethnicity and harm the cause of black unity." Ishmael Mkhabela, publicity secretary for Azapo, said:

"From our point of view, any ethnically-based organisation by Indians, Coloureds or Zulus is directly in line with Pretoria's policy of apartheid."<sup>(1)</sup>

Even the idea of a formation of UDF was denounced by the same Mkhabela:

"We see it as a conglomerate of ethnically orientated groups which perpetuate ethnicity and tribalism at a time when the oppressed should be rallied into a single organisation which does not have ethnicity in its structure."<sup>(2)</sup>

One African leader Mpiyake Kumalo responded:

"Throughout its existence Azapo has proved to be a reactionary organisation which hibernates comfortably in its cocoon for most times and only comes alive to react in comments about current events. Azapo gives the impression that it is holier than all other organisations."<sup>(3)</sup>

Six months later Zinzi Mandela, daughter of Nelson Mandela, spoke at a TIC meeting in Lenasia where she attacked what she called "ideologically lost political bandits" who "turn against the people's wishes as embodied in the Freedom Charter".<sup>(4)</sup> Curtis Nkondo, a former President of Azapo, attacked the Black Consciousness ideology for being misleading and said that any organisation which says whites are irrelevant may as well disband.

These few quotations indicate that within the black opposition groups in South Africa there are many problems, contradictions and even animosities. But before we attempt to assess these trends let us get the facts straight.

### **A Big National Event**

Dr Allan Boesak made a call for the formation of the UDF in January, 1983 and the first national conference which coincided with the official launching of the UDF was on August 20, 1983. Those of us who were present or who have seen the films on the national launch of the UDF will agree that this was really a big national event.

A steering committee was established to facilitate the formation of the UDF and a declaration of its fundamental principles was drawn up to which aspirant members will have to subscribe. A key requirement for membership was and is:

**"An unshakeable conviction in the creation of a non-racial, unitary state in South Africa, undiluted by racial or ethnic considerations as formulated in bantustan policy."<sup>(5)</sup>**

The decision to reactivate the TIC was taken to meet the demands of the new political situation created by the pending "new deal" constitution. The Transvaal Anti-SAIC was formed in June, 1981, with the specific purpose of dissuading Indians from voting in elections to the South African Indian Council in November of that year. The result was that fewer than 10 per cent of registered voters went to the polls. An Anti-SAIC statement said:

**"It is believed that the Anti-SAIC, which enjoyed tremendous support during the Anti-SAIC campaign, has outlived its mandate. It is (now) necessary to assert more positively our position in relation to the broad democratic forces."<sup>(6)</sup>**

It should be remembered that the TIC is one of the oldest organisations in South Africa — older than the ANC — with its origins going back to the British Indian Association founded by Gandhi before the Act of Union in 1910. It, together with the Natal Indian Congress, has a hard-won legitimacy in the Indian community. The South African Indian Council (SAIC) is controlled by the National People's Party of Amichand Rajbansi, chairman of the Council's executive committee.

Whilst these developments — the formation of the UDF and the revival of the TIC — were going on, a new organisation, the National Forum, was launched on June 11-12, 1983 at Hammanskraal, near Pretoria.

## **The Debate**

According to Saths Cooper, one of its leaders, the National Forum "is the realisation of a long search for a common working basis that began with the advent of the Black Consciousness Movement in the early seventies in the course of which Steve Biko paid with his life."<sup>(7)</sup>

However, there are differences between the National Forum and the original Black Consciousness Movement. In contrast to original Black Consciousness utterances, the National Forum is analysing the South African Society in terms of "class". But their "class analysis" is confusing. According to them South Africa is divided into a "ruling class" and an "oppressed working class". The implication here is that all whites are oppressors and all blacks are workers. They do admit that there are whites "who have rebelled and reneged on their class" but their role as a force for change is minimal.

Mkhabela, publicity secretary, expressed himself as follows:

"The dominant position in Azapo today is that the struggle is both a racial and a class struggle. And the dominant group in politics, in economics and the social sphere, are whites."<sup>(8)</sup>

And Cooper added:

"Whites in Southern Africa have never learned — or been taught — to follow. Those who wish to remain relevant can work to change such attitudes in their own communities, prepare for the change — and prevent white future shock as in Zimbabwe."<sup>(9)</sup>

Surely this differs from our movement's position which states that — although the black masses are the major forces for change — everybody has a role to play in this struggle for change. We do not advocate a policy of "preparation for change" and "prevention of future white shock"!

There is basically nothing new in these policies of the National Forum. This is the old thesis of the Trotskyite Non-European Unity Movement — a thesis of the haves and have nots. What is perhaps new is this "broad alliance" of the Trotskyite and Black Consciousness organisations.

Some of the leading stars in this broad alliance are Dr Neville Alexander, Muntu Myeza and Saths Cooper. Neville Alexander was a former member of the National Liberation Front which, it was said 20 years ago, was the continuation of the Yu Chi Chan Club. He was imprisoned for 10 years on Robben Island, released in 1974 and restricted — the ban expired in 1979. Muntu Myeza and Saths Cooper, General Secretary and Vice President of Azapo respectively, are also Robben Island "graduates" who both served 6 years after being found guilty in the Black Consciousness trial of 1975/76 of



conspiring to commit acts which might have endangered the maintenance of law and order: they organised a “viva Frelimo” rally!

In other words the fundamental pillar of black consciousness ideology today is that in the South African context there are “two classes” of people: the oppressed and oppressor. The oppressed and exploited are disfranchised and can therefore not join hands with whites — no matter how sincere those whites may be.

Even the Freedom Charter is questioned. Cooper says:

“Basically, we have serious reservations about its ethnic orientation. It is centred on preservation of racial groupings and recognising minority rights. We are fighting to stamp out all traces of ethnicity.”<sup>(10)</sup>

The Freedom Charter is regarded as a “particular demand at a particular epoch in history” and “certain things there would not find much relevance in a society almost three decades removed because a society is not a static thing like a document bound in history can be”.<sup>(11)</sup> It is said that the Freedom Charter is “a document of a particular political persuasion” and it stands for ‘liberal democracy’ whereas the Manifesto, a National Forum document, stands for ‘socialist democracy’.<sup>(12)</sup>

### **The Manifesto**

It is worth noting that the UDF does not feel it necessary to involve itself in this mud-slinging exercise. This is perhaps a sign of its maturity.

The National Forum was convened by Azapo, an organisation formed in 1978 which regards itself as a torch-bearer of Black Consciousness. The shift in the positions of Black Consciousness have been discussed, but this shift is more in words because the conception of “class” tends to coincide with “race”: the whites are oppressors and the blacks are workers. Besides the fact that Azapo advocates non-participation in any government structures or plans, it also rejects the emergence of the TIC as reinforcing the government’s ethnic divisions among blacks. Azapo is suspicious of whites. Said Mkhabela:

“We won’t sanction campaigning under white tutelage.”<sup>(13)</sup>

And Saths Cooper:

“We recognise there is a handful of dedicated whites who happen to find themselves as members of the white class. We say these people have a role to play. But, as I have already said, the only role they can play is within their own community. Their role can only be positive if they prepare their fellow whites for change in the country ... The challenge facing white liberals and the white left is that of working among their people. They should make them aware of evils they are perpetuating and prepare them for the dawning of a new Azania where whites will cease to see themselves as whites ... Black people don’t have to be told by whites about oppression. Blacks know it by experience.”<sup>(14)</sup>

The theories propounded in this quotation are fraught with danger. Suffice to say that this is a typical example of the very ethnicity which Saths Cooper and his colleagues are denouncing.

Nearly 600 delegates representing about 100 organisations attended the Hammanskraal National Forum meeting. It must be stated that some organisations, supporters of the UDF, attended because it had been said no decisions would be taken, only opinions would be canvassed. It was to be a forum of discussion. All the same, four commissions sat at the Forum dealing with the land question, the basis for principled unity, minimum demands and consolidation of these efforts against the so-called new deal. A Manifesto of the Azanian people was adopted. The resolutions commission reports and the Manifesto are full of inconsistencies.

The common and recurring themes are the struggle against “racial capitalism” — at times it is called “racist capitalism”; the struggle in South Africa is “nationalist in character and socialist in content”; the goal is the “establishment of a democratic anti-racist worker Republic in Azania” under black working class leadership. “They (the workers) alone can end the system as it stands today because they alone have nothing at all to lose.” The land is going to be under the control of the dictatorship of the proletariat. We are told by Saths Cooper that those organisations present constituted “the only road to liberation”<sup>(16)</sup> and that the Manifesto is “the only clear socialist document to emerge from amongst the ranks of the Black people”<sup>(17)</sup>.

When Saths Cooper talks like this it is clear that he has either not seen the Road to South African Freedom — the Programme of the South African Communist Party — or he refuses to accept it. The Programme does not talk of “racial capitalism”, but of *colonialism of a special type* — a thesis which the National Forum will not accept. Indeed, compared with the Communist Party Programme the demands in the Manifesto of the Azanian people look like a shopping list.

### National Question and Ethnicity

The term “racial capitalism” not only conceals but rejects the national oppression of our people. Indeed, Neville Alexander tells us:

“The class struggle against capitalist exploitation and the national struggle against racial oppression become one struggle under the general command of the black working class and its organisations. Class, colour and nation converge in the national liberation movement.”<sup>(18)</sup>

This formulation is repeated in the report on the land question:

"The working class struggle against capitalist exploitation and the national struggle against racial oppression have become one struggle under the general control and direction of the Black working class."<sup>19</sup>

This wrong thesis inevitably leads to the rejection of the national democratic stage of our revolution and calls for a socialist Azania or what Nosizwe calls in his book *One Azania, One Nation*.<sup>20</sup> This theoretical framework "socialism now" is the basis for an attack on the Freedom Charter, for the trivialisation of the national question and a refusal to move from abstract theory or abstract intellectualism to concrete and living reality.

Here we see an attempt to "impose" working class leadership. The attempt to merge the working class struggle with the national liberation struggle is *sectarianism par excellence*. According to this sectarian view the stages of our revolution are negated and the working class is being mobilised, not to spearhead the struggle for national liberation and against national oppression, but to spearhead a struggle for a "socialist Azania." There is a lot that is assumed without being worked for.

ANC President O.R. Tambo hit the nail on the head when, at a press conference in London recently, he said:

"We have been aware of the growing insistence on South Africa being an independent, sovereign African state. The people of South Africa do not regard this regime as presiding over an independent sovereign country because that independence and sovereignty is restricted only to the white population, a small minority of the people of South Africa. Therefore, if you see South Africa as simply a white country of 4½ million people, then indeed it is independent, it is sovereign . . . But then you are proceeding on the basis that 26-27 million people just don't exist. We reject that, totally. *We say South Africa is one country. It has some 30 million people, but it is being run as if it was two countries, the one colonising the other ...*"<sup>(21)</sup>

On the question of civil rights, President Tambo said:

"... The South African constitution excludes the blacks. They are outside the constitution. There is nothing they can do about decisions, policies of the South African regime. They don't belong. They are fighting from outside this white state. That is not a civil rights struggle at all. If we were part of the constitution, if we were citizens like any other, then of course there would be rights to fight for, as there are rights to fight for in the United States. But in South Africa the position is different. *Our struggle is basically, essentially, fundamentally a national liberation struggle ..*" (our emphasis).<sup>(22)</sup>

This is where the National Forum people go wrong. They do not accept the colonial nature of the apartheid regime and logically reject that our struggle is, to quote President Tambo, "basically, essentially, fundamentally a national liberation struggle."

### **On the Transvaal Indian Congress**

It should be remembered that the anti-SAIC campaign in 1981 not only dislodged the reactionary and collaborationist hold over the Indian community in the Transvaal, throwing their ranks into complete chaos and disrepute, but also indicated a need for a fully-fledged progressive political organisation.<sup>(23)</sup> The anti-SAIC presented an alternative political leadership and organisation to the community in the context of a massive popular rejection of apartheid and its puppets. The campaign was the first national political campaign in the Indian areas since the Defiance Campaign of 1952 and served as a political lever for advancing the level of political consciousness in the Indian community. The Transvaal anti-SAIC operated as a committee which sought to mobilise Indians in the Transvaal against the SAIC elections. It was an issue-oriented organisation rather than a political organisation with a long-term programme.

By the end of the campaign it had become evident that gains could no longer be made by mobilising public support through mass meetings and distributing newsletters, and that what was needed was to create a basis for ongoing political activity and organisation. Only in this way could activists provide the community in which they are based with consistent political, moral and intellectual leadership. This becomes all the more important when the state takes initiatives to coopt sections of the population. How can one mobilise or win over these sections — for instance the middle strata — if one declares them enemies? To declare them enemies is to play into the hands of the regime.

A political organisation was necessary to consolidate the gains made during the anti-SAIC campaign, to entrench the position of the political leadership that emerged during the campaign and to forge alliances with religious, cultural, sporting and other organisations which already existed and draw them together in an attempt to unify them under a political programme.

Those who are critical of the idea of reviving the TIC seem to be confusing goals with methods and mistake the consciousness of political activists and intellectuals for the consciousness of the masses. Establishing structures which are sensitive to the unique conditions confronted by the oppressed and linked by coordinating machinery, ensures both mass organisation and the unity of the oppressed at mass level.

An organisation can only be accused of being ethnic if it evokes an ethnic identity amongst its supporters, if it encourages an ethnic separateness and protects and advances its own separate and corporate group interests. But



mention of the TIC evokes not ethnicity, but historical events and symbols rich in significance and meaning: the Xuma-Dadoo-Naicker pact; the Congress of the People; the Defiance Campaign; Congress Alliance; the Freedom Charter; Dadoo, Lutuli, Mandela, Naicker, Sisulu etc.

Since the late 1940's the TIC has been closely associated with the struggle for liberation from all forms of oppression and exploitation for all the people of South Africa. It is deeply rooted in the community, with many people still supporting its proud history in the struggle for a non-racial democracy in South Africa. A new political organisation would have to prove itself anew and spend a great deal of time and energy in an attempt to establish its legitimacy at a mass level.

It is through the medium of ideology that the mass relate to a political programme and therefore an organisation. The Freedom Charter is a strong material force at a mass level, not only because of its content, but because it has a deep symbolic resonance. The revival of the TIC is not a sentimental act of faith — important as that is — but the establishment of a continuity between popular revolutionary tradition of struggle and present interests and goals of the people.

One cannot mobilise people politically on the basis of some abstract notion of politics. One has to begin from where the people are, from their understanding of the burning issues, and proceed from there. The reality of our situation is that the enemy has divided our people. It has imposed not only separation but also a hierarchy of racial oppression.

The oppressed people react and respond differently to this separation and hierarchy of racial oppression. Let us take the various student boycotts. In the Soweto uprising of 1976 the African students led the way and called on the other students to boycott. The response was slow and uneven. The Coloured students led the boycott in 1980. Again the response was very uneven. Even the famous Committee of 81 in the Cape — hailed as a model of organisation and discipline in the conduct of a student boycott — revealed some problems. The African students were never totally integrated into this committee, as demonstrated by their continued boycott after other students had called theirs off.<sup>(24)</sup>

*What we are saying is that unity must be created and not assumed.*

We must fight against any ethnic separatism or anything that promotes ethnic differences or exclusive ethnicity. This does not mean that we should ignore all manifestations of ethnicity. We must *build up* a truly united struggle against national oppression, starting from the realities of separation. A simple assertion of the desirability of unity means nothing. Unity has to be built; it has to be fought for.

## **Problems and Contradictions**

Problems facing organisations at home are manifold. Azapo was formed in 1978, the Azanian Students' Organisation (Azaso) in 1979. Whilst Azapo is strongly opposed to the Freedom Charter, or parts of it, Azaso endorses the Freedom Charter. This endorsement of the Freedom Charter by Azaso represents also a sharp break from Azaso's predecessor, SASO, which was firmly in the Black Consciousness tradition.

The attitude to the Freedom Charter has become a demarcation line, and now as in the past, amongst black organisations at home. In a joint statement released to *The Sowetan*, the South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU), General and Allied Workers' Union (GAWU), Congress of South African Students (Cosas) and Azanian Students' Organisation (Azaso) said they could not be party to the adoption of the National Forum's Manifesto because they were still committed to the Freedom Charter:

"We reiterate our uncompromising commitment to the historic Freedom Charter as the only democratic document drafted in the history of the liberation struggle. The Charter stands out from all other alternatives for change in South Africa, not only because of the manner in which it came into being, but also because of the demands reflected in it. It can therefore never be substituted without the will of the majority. Any attempt by an individual or group to discredit or undermine it can only be seen as an act of betrayal to the aspirations of all the people of South Africa."<sup>(25)</sup>

In its opposition to "ethnicity" Azapo refused to deal directly with UDF because of UDF's multi-racial composition. Azapo talks only to UDF's black affiliates — in itself a form of ethnicity.

These problems hit the Media Workers' Association of Southern Africa (MWASA) at its conference in East London in January 1984. The organisation split over:

- a) a decision to open its doors to whites and
- b) affiliation to UDF.

Most members from the Southern and Northern Transvaal regions and the Natal region staged a walkout. The problem here is that the old constitution restricted membership to black workers and, according to the new MWASA president, J. Fuzile of Mdantsane, the new constitution is designed to meet the requirements of an industrial trade union which MWASA has evolved into from its original journalists-only body.<sup>(26)</sup> The other problem is that those who are against joining UDF because "this was a betrayal of workers' interests" maintain that black workers have common problems and there is a need to identify with one another and "no whites are members of the working class because they make the laws and are privileged."<sup>(27)</sup>

A brief glance at the historical background will put these arguments into their proper perspective.

MWASA has been a major component of Black Consciousness. Three significant Black Consciousness unions existed prior to the regime's clampdown on 18 Black Consciousness organisations in 1977. These were the Black Allied Workers' Union (BAWU), the Consultative Committee for Black Trade Unions (CCBTU) and the Union of Black Journalists (UBJ). Several breakaways have occurred in BAWU, basically on ideological grounds. Out of these have appeared the non-racial General and Allied Workers Union (GAWU), the National Federation of Workers (NFW) and, most notably, the South African Allied Workers' Union (SAAWU). BAWU still lingers on, in fact limps about, as a feeble and ineffective organisation. The CCBTU shifted away from orthodox Black Consciousness in 1979 and became known as the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA). The UBJ is the only labour organisation to be outlawed by Pretoria. That was in 1977. SAAWU has been banned by the Ciskei bantustan.

The Writers' Association of South Africa (WASA) was formed by the Black Consciousness journalists following the ban on the UBJ. In 1980 WASA expanded to include other black workers in the media industry and became MWASA, the Media Workers' Association of South Africa. MWASA remained loyal to the tenets of Black Consciousness and rejected all contact with the South African Typographical Union and the South African Society of Journalists, which are largely white organisations.

Indications of strife within MWASA appeared when the Western Cape branch joined UDF towards the end of 1983. At their regional conference the Southern and Northern Transvaal branches of MWASA expressed their displeasure at this move. Both wings call themselves MWASA.

What has actually happened to MWASA is that a new, non-racial MWASA, intent on joining UDF, has emerged and for the first time the union is being led by a majority of non-journalist media workers. Both president and vice-president are non-journalists.

The UDF, though welcoming MWASA in its ranks, expressed its displeasure at the split and urged both factions to settle the dispute.

The UDF — which has more than 600 affiliates — fights against the Koornhof Bills (the most notorious of which is the Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill) <sup>(28)</sup> and the new constitution. The two conditions for affiliation are support for the UDF declaration <sup>(29)</sup> and working outside the government-created structures. The structure of UDF is a decentralised, federal structure with five established regions: Transvaal,

Natal, Border, Western and Eastern Cape. Plans are afoot to establish regional structures in the Northern Cape and the Orange Free State.

This is not to suggest that the UDF does not have problems. The very emergence of the UDF and its fast rate of development created an excitement which drew the leadership of many of the affiliated organisations into UDF campaigns at the expense of the affiliates themselves. There has also been the problem of police harassment and intimidation, the distribution of false leaflets by the enemy, arrests and bannings, the attempt to project the UDF as a "front of the ANC". All this is aimed at isolating the UDF from the masses.

Another problem is that the base of the UDF is largely urban, yet repression is at its worst in the rural areas. These and many other problems are cause for concern and their solution is not always easy.

The defeat of the new constitution is imperative. It seeks to co-opt the Coloured and Indian people into the ruling group as junior partners in the continued oppression of our people, thus destroying the basis for a non-racial democratic movement. It is imposed by the Nationalist Government as a blueprint for minority rule maintained by institutionalised violence. This new constitution implies African denationalisation and exile to barren bantustans. It opens the way for the incorporation of Indian and Coloured youth in the armed forces where they will be compelled to shed the blood of fellow blacks.

## **Conclusion**

In this article we have tried to show that the ideology of Black Consciousness today is at a crossroads. Roughly speaking, one can identify these trends or tendencies in it: there is the residue of the 60's and 70's; there is that wing which has accepted or is moving towards acceptance of the Freedom Charter; and there is the National Forum group which is heavily influenced by the Unity Movement through leaders like Neville Alexander. Neville Alexander took the term Azania from Black Consciousness, but in return he gave them "class analysis" which did not differ much from the Black Consciousness ideology except that he threw overboard the "national question" and substituted it with terms like "racial capitalism" and the struggle for a "socialist workers' Republic of Azania". He attacks all those who are fighting for national liberation as advocates of ethnicity, thus creating a platform to attack the ANC and the Freedom Charter from ultra-left positions.



One would expect these “new radicals” to embrace real socialism — but if anything they are more vicious towards the South African Communist Party. This anti-C.P. stance is part of a broader perspective, namely rejection of the existing socialist world, especially the Soviet Union. This anti-communism and anti-Sovietism leads them straight into a political desert and, because they have no firm allies internationally, they end up being political grasshoppers. By contrast it was reported that UDF supporters at their meeting in Soweto “bowed their heads in silence in a gesture of respect for the late Yuri Andropov.”<sup>(30)</sup>

It is perhaps proper to remind these vehement critics of ethnicity that, as early as 1866, Marx showed that the nihilistic rejection of nationalities could lead to recognition and acceptance of the nationalism of the oppressors. In a letter to Engels on June 20, 1866 he said the French supporters of Proudhon’s ideas unwittingly interpreted rejection of nationalities as “their absorption by the model French nation.”

This is the logical end of national nihilism, of abstract theorising — rejection of the people’s history and aspirations. During these times of the Nkomati Accord we need to emphasise our internationalism within the country and abroad. This is the only antidote to apartheid bantustans, Koornhof bills and the new constitution.

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- 23) See: *Work in Progress*, Johannesburg — August, 1983 pp. 14-21
- 24) Ibid.
- 25) *Sowetan*, 24.6.83
- 26) *Cape Times*, 31.1.84
- 27) *Rand Daily Mail*, 1.2.84
- 28) For an analysis of this Bill see: David Riga, "Pretoria's Genocide Bill" in: *Sechaba*, April, May, June, 1984. This series has been reproduced in pamphlet form under the title: *We Charge Genocide*.
- 29) For the full text of the UDF declaration see: *Star*, 29.8.83
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## The “Big Boys” Take Over

# S.A. ECONOMY DOMINATED BY MONOPOLY CAPITAL

By Phineas Malinga

Among the classic achievements of Marxism is its recognition of the crucial role played in the development of capitalism by the phenomenon of concentration. The propagandists of capitalism (whether they come in the guise of open partisans or of ostensibly objective academic economists) harp always on the virtues of competition. Competition promotes progress, ensures efficiency, keeps prices down, and so on.

There may have been some truth in it in the early stages of capitalist development. Competition is, however, a self-destructive process. The weaker enterprises go to the wall and are taken over by the stronger. Therefore competition does not continue, but gives way to monopoly.

In his great treatise *Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism* Lenin pays tribute to “the works of Marx, which by a theoretical and historical analysis of capitalism showed that free competition gives rise to the concentration of production, which, in turn, at a certain stage of development, leads to monopoly.”<sup>1</sup> Lenin went on to show how strikingly this analysis had been borne out by the history of Western Europe and North America since the death of Marx.

“The enormous growth of industry and the remarkably rapid process of concentration of production in ever-larger enterprises represent one of the most characteristic features of capitalism ... Cartels become one of the foundations of the whole economic life. Capitalism has been transformed into imperialism ... Production becomes social, but appropriation remains private. The social means of production remains private property of a few. The general framework of the formally recognised free competition remains, but the yoke of a few monopolists on the rest of the population becomes a hundred times heavier, more burdensome and intolerable.”<sup>(2)</sup>

Lenin was describing a process which took place in the principal capitalist countries during the last decade of the nineteenth century. This was, of course, precisely the period during which the mining industry was first established and capitalism began to take root in South Africa. It is therefore not surprising that capitalism in South Africa showed strongly monopolistic tendencies from the very beginning. Cecil Rhodes, the first South African capitalist of importance, was not a man who built up an enterprise by devising new manufacturing processes or more efficient services. He was essentially a financier, whose talent lay in the amalgamation of existing enterprises. He established a single dominant company in the diamond mining industry — De Beers — and was instrumental in seeing to it that the gold mining industry was organised from the outset on the oligopolistic “group system”.

This system is important because it set precedents which have been followed in recent years in much wider sectors of the South African economy. Under the “group system” each gold mine is owned and operated by a separate company — East Rand Proprietary Mines Limited, President Brand Gold Mines Limited, and so on. These companies are all quoted on the Stock Exchange, shares in them are freely bought and sold and each has large numbers of shareholders. In each case, however, a strategic bloc of shares is held by one of the mining finance houses, such as the Anglo-American Corporation. This bloc may constitute an absolute majority of all the shares, but it need not necessarily do so. As Lenin himself observed:

“Experience shows that it is sufficient to own 40 per cent of the shares of a company in order to direct its affairs, since a certain number of small, scattered shareholders find it impossible, in practice, to attend general meetings, etc. The ‘democratisation’ of the ownership of shares, from which the bourgeois sophists and opportunists, would-be Social Democrats, expect (or declare that they expect) the ‘democratisation of capital’, the strengthening of the role and significance of small-scale production etc. is, in fact, one of the ways of increasing the powers of the financial oligarchy.”<sup>(3)</sup>

Thus the South African mining finance house holds either a majority or a large minority bloc in the shares of the individual gold mining company. This enables it to nominate the directors of the mining company, who are in practice employees of the finance house. Control is further consolidated by agreements in terms of which the mining company appoints the finance house as “geological consultant”, “engineering consultant”, “service company” etc. Such agreements enable a variety of technical and financial tasks to be performed on a centralised basis for the whole “group” — i.e. all the companies controlled by a particular finance house.



## **The British Way**

This system was, of course, first instituted by British capitalists who dominated the South African scene in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is therefore interesting to note that it is not a system which finds favour with British capitalists in their own domestic market. On his home ground, the British (like the American) investor prefers to avoid what he calls "minority situations" i.e. the situation of a minority shareholder in a company which is controlled by some other company. Therefore, if company A in Britain wishes to take over company B, it is expected to buy all the shares in B. The result is that B becomes a 100% subsidiary of A, with no outside shareholders and no separate quotation on the Stock Exchange.

It follows that a list of the "top 50" or "top 100" companies in Britain (or America) is a list of 50 or 100 separate organisations. They are not entirely unconnected organisations — there are all sorts of interlocking shareholdings, directorships etc. — but no one public company quoted on the Stock Exchange is wholly controlled by any other.

British capitalists have always had one standard for their conduct at home and another for their conduct overseas. Not only did they happily create "minority situations" in South Africa as long as 100 years ago, but the creation of such situations has been a favourite technique of the neo-colonial period. Numerous British companies which formerly operated with a monolithic structure throughout the British Empire have adapted to modern conditions by hiving off their operations in particular ex-colonial territories into separate companies, in which local investors are allowed to buy some of the shares. Barclays Bank is a conspicuous example. Thirty years ago, Barclays Bank (Dominion, Colonial and Overseas) Limited was a single company with its head office in London and branches in many overseas countries. Today, there is Barclays National Bank in South Africa and similar, ostensibly separate companies in Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, West Indies and so on. Where the local authorities are prepared to allow it, Barclays Bank International, of London, holds a majority of the shares in the local bank. If the local authorities insist, as some have done, that at least 51% of the shares must be sold to local investors, Barclays cheerfully obeys — remembering perhaps what Lenin said nearly 70 years ago about the power of a 40% shareholding!

## **Concentration in South Africa**

There have, then, been two alternative precedents which South African capitalists could follow as they moved, in quite recent times, into a new phase

of imperialist development of the South African economy. This phase has been characterised by the rapidly increasing concentration of economic power among the South African capitalist class. The immediate post-war period had seen some dispersal of economic power as a number of indigenous enterprises arose to challenge the hegemony of the old mining financial houses. Now, a very small number of these newcomers have "made it" into an increasingly tight inner circle of power.

The last decade has seen a rash of takeovers. They have, however, for the most part been takeovers "colonial style", not "London style." The precedent which the South African bourgeoisie has chosen to follow has been that which the British in South Africa and elsewhere in the Empire use, rather than that of the British in their own market. "Minority situations" abound. Companies are taken over by acquisition of a strategic bloc of shares, not of the entire capital of the victim.

The result is an extremely complicated situation in which the outside observer can easily be deceived. Companies which are controlled by other companies continue to be quoted on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange. The "top 100 South African companies" is a deceptive list. It does not in fact contain 100 separate organisations.

It is only very recently that some South African bourgeois economists have begun to do and publish the research needed to unravel the true state of affairs. Their findings have been greeted with some dismay by the bourgeoisie itself. (Here is another echo of Lenin's *Imperialism*. He was writing at a time when bourgeois economists in Britain, Germany and America were just beginning to realise how far concentration had gone in their countries. Many of them disliked what they saw and expressed fears that the true ideals of "free enterprise" were being abandoned. The same fear exists among South African bourgeois liberals today.)

### **The Law of the Jungle**

The most interesting source of information on concentration in South Africa at the present time is Robin McGregor, who edits the annual publication *Who Owns Whom*. He created something of a sensation, first with the 1983 edition of his publication, which appeared in February, and then with a conference held in August of the same year.<sup>(4)</sup> His thesis was that "seven giant corporations control nearly all of South Africa's vast business wealth." The seven were, in order of size:

Anglo-American Corporation  
SANLAM

Barlow Rand  
Anglo-Vaal  
Rembrandt  
Liberty Life  
Old Mutual

By far the biggest is Anglo-American, whose control of the companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange was estimated by McGregor at 52½% in February 1983 and 56% in August. Anglo-American overtook Rand Mines as the biggest of the mining finance houses when the Free State goldfield was opened up around 1950. Since then, its expansion into secondary industry has been inexorable. Two important industrial enterprises — African Explosives and Chemical Industries and African Highveld Steel Works — were created by the Anglo-American group. Others have been taken over, notably S.A. Breweries (itself a large conglomerate which controls O.K. Bazaars among others) and the Tongaat-Hulett sugar combine. In some cases, the process by which Anglo-American exercises its control is very complicated. For example, the interest which it acquired in S.A. Breweries was ostensibly only 20%. But a further 40% is controlled by Johannesburg Consolidated Investments, an old mining house which itself passed under Anglo-American control some time ago. The total number of companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange which are controlled by Anglo-American is estimated at 70. The assets of companies owned and administered by Anglo-American have been valued at R17,000 million, while the Johannesburg *Star* declares itself incapable of estimating the value of the assets indirectly controlled.<sup>(5)</sup>

SANLAM, at number two, is a life insurance company with a specifically Afrikaner Nationalist flavour. McGregor put the extent of its control at 38 quoted companies, equivalent to 9.4% of the total. Its empire includes two mining finance houses. One of these — General Mining — faded from prominence a long time ago, but the other — Union Corporation — was a considerable independent power in the land until quite recently. SANLAM also controls four small banks.

At number three, Barlow Rand is an amalgamation of the industrial firm of Thomas Barlow Ltd. with Rand Mines Ltd. — the famous “Corner House group” which dominated the gold mining industry before World War Two. Its control of quoted companies was put at 7.4%, comprising 25 companies which include such well-known names as Tiger Oats, Pretoria Portland Cement and Imperial Cold Storage.

The remaining four of the "big seven" consist of two more life insurance companies, another mining finance house and one purely industrial complex in the Rembrandt group.

The 1984 edition of *Who Owns Whom* shows that the trend is continuing. The SANLAM share of the total is now over 10% and Barlow Rand over 8%, taking the combined share of these two plus Anglo-American steadily towards the 80% mark.

### **A Different Picture**

The picture painted by McGregor's analysis is totally different from that which emerges from any simple listing of quoted companies in order of size. For example, the *Financial Mail* publishes a list of the "top 100 South African industrial companies." The first twelve entries on this list are as follows:

1. Barlow Rand
2. C.G. Smith
3. S.A. Breweries
4. Rembrandt Group
5. Anglo-American Industrial Holdings
6. SASOL
7. Tiger and Sugar Holdings
8. African Explosives and Chemical Industries
9. Sentrachem
10. Federale Volksbeleggings
11. Tiger Oats
12. Anglo-Transvaal Industrial

But Barlow Rand owns 65% of C.G. Smith, which owns 79% of Tiger and Sugar Holdings, which owns 53% of Tiger Oats. Thus four of these top twelve are in the Barlow Rand group. As already mentioned, Nos 3 and 8, as well as 5, are in the Anglo-American group. SANLAM controls Nos 9 and 10.

To complete the picture of the present-day South African economy, two elements must be mentioned which fall outside the area controlled by the "big seven" financial-industrial conglomerates. Firstly there is the State sector. The largest units in this sector are S.A. Transport Services, which runs the railways, harbours and airways and has assets valued at R11,817m, and ESCOM, the electricity supply corporation, with assets valued at R11,021m. The Post Office has not in the past been of comparable size but is currently embarking on an R8,500m investment programme for electronic equipment. There can be little doubt that this programme includes an element of concealed military expenditure. The openly military enterprise



Armcor is increasingly important. The iron and steel corporation ISCOR, which laid the foundations of South African state-owned industry half a century ago, is now a very large enterprise but no longer among the outstanding growth centres.

Secondly, there are the big three banks, Barclays, Standard and Volkskas.

The first two are still British-owned and represent the largest elements of foreign capital on the South African scene. They do not feature on the list which we discussed above because they do not operate by acquiring controlling shareholdings in mining or industrial companies. They are nevertheless extremely powerful (the assets of Barclays National Bank at the end of the 1981-82 financial year were R10,795m) and have all sorts of connections with the other big groups. Barclays is particularly closely connected with Anglo-American, Standard with Old Mutual and Volkskas with SANLAM.<sup>(6)</sup>

We may thus summarise by saying that outside the sphere of agriculture, the South African economy is substantially controlled from eleven power centres — the State, the three banks and the seven financial-industrial conglomerates. This represents a substantially greater degree of concentration than is found in any of the major Western capitalist countries, but somewhat comparable to the situation in Japan.

### **The Yoke becomes Heavier**

We have already quoted Lenin's view that the concentration of economic power in the hands of ever fewer capitalists leads to increasing misery for the people. This, too, can be illustrated by the existing situation in South Africa. While the seventies saw increases in black wage levels in some parts of the economy — and much official propaganda about "elimination of poverty" as a result — this trend has not continued into the eighties. According to a survey by Professor Nel of the University of South Africa, published towards the end of 1982,<sup>(7)</sup> the real remuneration per household for Africans in Johannesburg fell by 19.7% over a period to the end of 1980. This was partly due to the fact that the availability of employment did not keep pace with the growth of population. Since 1980, unemployment has continued to grow, even in the urban areas considered in isolation.

But, of course, any statistics concerning the urban areas reveal only the tip of the iceberg of African deprivation, since it is the consistent policy of the apartheid state to export unemployment and poverty as far as possible to the rural areas. A recent Cape Town University survey<sup>8</sup> spoke of "two distinct trends in black income and welfare" during the 1970's. The one trend was upwards, for those Africans who had employment in the manufacturing,

mining and financial sectors. The other was downwards, for the rest of the African population. Precise statistics of this second trend are virtually non-existent. Surveys of wages are not made on the platteland. The increasing numbers of unemployed who are "endorsed out" of the urban areas are also largely eliminated from the statistical records. Professor Francis Wilson, of Cape Town University, is thus reduced to saying that the information available "suggests that poverty remains a problem." Anyone who actually knows the conditions of the African poor will classify that as the understatement of the year.

If the system is to survive, jobs must be created on an unprecedented scale. This, however, is precisely what the present trend does not offer. The takeover fever of the last few years has taken the place of new productive investment. What worries some liberal bourgeois observers most is that, having now gone about as far as it is possible to go in carving up the South African economy between them, the giant monopolies will turn their ambitions towards acquisitions outside South Africa, meanwhile holding the South African economy in a stagnant condition. There are already signs that this is happening. The Anglo-American group has for some time had an investment vehicle in Britain — Charter Consolidated. This has not been very successful and now plays second fiddle to Minorco, a company domiciled in Bermuda. This is an example of international finance capital in its ultimate form — based in an "offshore tax haven", paying taxes to nobody, answerable to no government even remotely capable of controlling it, free to snap up bargains wherever they may appear in the capitalist world. Rembrandt has owned tobacco companies in Britain, West Germany and the USA for some years. S.A. Breweries has recently acquired a hotel and casino complex in Atlantic City, USA, Liberty Life is acquiring both insurance and property companies in Britain.

Let the rest of the capitalist world beware! Here are monopolies as greedy as any that imperialism has spawned. They play by no gentlemanly rules. They are adept at covering up their tracks. It will not be surprising if they succeed in devouring a fair number of victims outside South Africa.

But Lenin has the last word:

"From all that has been said in this book on the economic nature of imperialism, it follows that we must define it as capitalism in transition or, more precisely, as moribund capitalism."<sup>9</sup>

The case of South Africa clearly bears this out. The capitalist economy of South Africa has become a deformed monster, incapable of further progress. For that reason among many others, its fate is sealed.

## References

1. V.I. Lenin *Selected Works* (2 vol. edition) Vol.1, p 641.
2. *ibid.* pp 642,645
3. *ibid.* p 663
4. Extensively reported in *The Star* of August 10, 1983.
5. *The Star*, August 11, 1983.
6. Figures in the last three paragraphs are taken from several issues of the *Financial Mail* during the second half of 1983.
7. Summarised in *Financial Mail*, December 17, 1982.
8. Summarised in *The Star*, February 20, 1984.
9. V.I. Lenin *Selected Works* (2 vol. edition) Vol. 1, p 723.



# OBSTACLES ON THE ROAD TO TRADE UNION UNITY

By R.E. Matajo

The struggle for trade union unity is vital to our struggle for national liberation. It is necessary to have trade union unity not only to protect the interests of the working people who constitute the majority of the population but also to promote the mobilisation of the masses in the fight to overthrow the Botha-Malan regime.

Trade unions have a dual function: firstly to safeguard the workers' conditions and raise their living standards; secondly to conduct a struggle against the wages system which oppresses them and replace it with socialism, which will end the profit motive and the exploitation of man by man. As Karl Marx said in 1866, the trade unions must "learn how to act consciously as focal points for organising the working class in the greater interests of its 'complete emancipation'. They must support every social and political movement directed towards this aim".<sup>(1)</sup> By 'complete emancipation' of the working class Marx meant nothing less than a socialist state under the rule of the working people.

At the same time we must bear in mind Lenin's warning against the 'economist' or 'workerist' delusion that socialism can be achieved through trade union struggle alone. It is impossible, he pointed out in 1902, "to develop the class political consciousness of the workers solely from within the trade union movement, that is to say, exclusively, or at least mainly, by means of the economic struggle. Such a view is radically wrong". The economic struggle is "too narrow", he said.



"The workers can acquire class political consciousness *only from without*, that is, only outside of the economic struggle, outside of the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships between *all* classes and the state and the government — the sphere of the inter-relations between *all* classes .... To bring political knowledge to the workers the Social-Democrats (Communists — Ed.) must *go among all the classes of the population*, must despatch units of their army *in all directions*".<sup>(2)</sup>

That is why, in addition to a strong trade union movement, we need a strong Communist Party, which alone can provide the ideology, political perspectives and organisational capacity needed by the proletariat in its fight to change the social system which oppresses it.

Nevertheless, from every point of view the fight for trade union unity in South Africa today is of crucial importance. Action for trade union unity must not be left to sloganising and rhetorical statements. We must work and fight for affirmative action, explain the purpose and meaning of our struggle to the workers, involve them in the preparation and execution of our plans to eliminate the evil apartheid regime.

The regime boasts that it has raised living standards all round and that the country is prosperous. But in fact its own figures prove the contrary. The South African economy is under stress, and the value of the rand in relation to the dollar has declined by more than 50% since 1971.<sup>(3)</sup> A Central Statistical Services survey in 1983 gave the following figures of average monthly salaries:

Africans	R290
Coloureds	385
Indians	540
Whites	1,100

In the mining industry the wage gap is even wider, with Africans earning R272 a month as against a white average of R1,500, Indians R760 and Coloureds R470.<sup>(4)</sup> But in real terms even the official figures show that the wage levels of all race groups have declined since the end of 1982.<sup>(5)</sup> Moreover, the official figures are misleading, excluding as they do the workers on the farms, in the Bantustans and the unemployed. Studies in Cape Town and Johannesburg have shown that there has been a drastic decline in African living standards in both rural and urban areas in the last two decades.<sup>(6)</sup>

It is the hardship and suffering of the masses which have led to the trade union "explosion" of the last couple of years, during which the militant unions have won between 250 and 300 recognition agreements through strike action and general pressure on the employers. And let us not forget that Africans are now, by law, included in the definition of 'employees' under the

industrial conciliation laws and men and women workers of all races are now able to join any kind of union, whether registered or unregistered. With the increase in the number of African workers in many industries and a parallel decline in the number or proportion of white workers, the power of the black workers in general has grown so much that white workers are now knocking at the door of black trade unions and asking for membership because "You don't get fired easily if you belong to the black unions".<sup>(7)</sup>

This approach marks a very important change of attitude on the part of not only the white workers but also the Nationalist regime which 28 years ago, when the Industrial Conciliation Act was introduced in Parliament in 1956, pledged to "bleed African unions to death". However, the African unions did not die. In spite of repression, intimidation, imprisonment and persecution, the courage and endurance of the African unions enabled them not only to survive but to increase their membership and activity. Eventually the regime was forced to face the facts, and introduced legislation in the period 1979-81 eliminating racial categories from industrial law. These legal changes have demonstrated the ability of our workers by determined collective action to break through racial barriers and force the all-white regime to change course.

We do not imply, by this, that the regime has undergone a change of heart. It has merely changed its tactics, and is employing new methods of divide and rule, including the extensive use of labour spies on the factory floor,<sup>8</sup> to preserve white domination and exploitation. These divide-and-rule tactics of the bosses and the state have left the trade union movement with many divisions and conflicts of interest based on race, attitudes to politics and the social structure. It is the task of our liberation movement, which has declared war on apartheid, to work ceaselessly for trade union unity as an essential precondition for victory in our struggle.

To understand the problem confronting us, let us briefly survey the labour scene.

### **Racial Unions, Not Forces For Liberation**

White industrial unions are represented in the *South African Confederation of Labour — SACL*. Its main components are the *Mine Workers' Union* (MWU, 17,000 members) and the *S.A. Iron and Steel Allied Workers' Union* (SAISAWU 36,000 members). Various small craft unions are also affiliated to SACL.

SACL's union leaders are highly political, racist and reactionary. They make no bones about participating in politics and support parties of the extreme right such as the *Herstigte Nasionale Party* and the *Conservative Party*.

The recommendations of the 1979 Wichahn Report and subsequent labour legislation drove a wedge in the ranks of SACLA. Some unions, afraid of black workers' competition, reluctantly accepted the government's changes and opened their ranks to workers of other races. They either disaffiliated or were expelled from SACLA. During 1980-82 eight unions disaffiliated from SACLA leaving it with a total of 13 affiliates. The combined membership dropped from 197,000 in 1979 to 126,500 in 1982.

Some member unions left because they wished to open their ranks to black workers; others disagreed with SACLA's opposition to the new labour laws. The Spoorbond, formerly the most conservative of the white railway unions, actually amended its constitution to open the door to black workers. The union officials explained that increasing numbers of Africans were working shoulder to shoulder with white railway workers. The white railway unions, the Artisan Staff Associations S.A. and Police Staff Association similarly amended their constitutions to allow for mixed membership.

The white Mine Workers' Union remained in SACLA, putting up a last ditch stand in defence of the colour bar. They have sought protection within the right-wing HNP and the Conservative Party and the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs, while at the same time recruiting white workers from other unions who object to their leadership's open-door policy.

The MWU concentrated on the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) and the SAISAWU which in 1978 agreed to a revised industrial council agreement for the metal industry. This change, which scrapped the job reservation clause, provided job protection for whites as well as opportunities for Africans to undertake certain types of skilled work.

There are differences of opinion amongst the reactionary-led unions whose membership includes white workers. They agree in their determination to retain the white workers' monopoly of skilled jobs but disagree about methods. The MWU has chosen to fight the labour laws through the ballot box in unison with the right-wing racist parties, whereas the SAISAWU has decided to protect white workers by taking part in negotiations with the government and industrial councils. When the MWU tried to recruit workers from the SAISAWU, the latter invoked a closed shop clause in their agreement and threatened to expel those who joined the MWU.

### **Non-Racial Unions**

The great majority of trade unions do in fact maintain an open-door policy. Progressive trade unions refused to go along with the *Trade Union Council of*

*South Africa (TUCSA)* in 1954 because it introduced a clause excluding non-registered unions which in fact meant African trade unions. It was this exclusion of African unions that led to the formation of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), which adhered to the traditional trade union policy of admitting unions without regard to the racial composition of their membership.

TUCSA is the country's largest trade union centre that admits both uni-racial and multi-racial unions. It claims to be non-political, but in fact identifies closely with the regime's apartheid policies and defends them against critics at home and abroad. TUCSA officials agitate vigorously against the use of anti-apartheid sanctions by the international community, support the Botha regime's constitutional changes even to the extent of calling upon the white voters to register a "yes" vote in the referendum, consistently refuse to take part in protest against the banning of trade unionists and the torture and killing of trade union detainees as in the case of Dr. Neil Aggett.

Noting the growing strength of the African labour force and the decline of the white labour force, TUCSA has in recent years moved to organise African trade unions in "parallel" bodies dominated by the white-led unions, with management support thus obstructing the formation of independent democratic African unions. The TUCSA leadership has never overcome its innate hostility to the rising tide of African unionism.

At last year's TUCSA Annual Conference in September 1983 a motion by the Mine Surface Officials' Association, an all-white body, called on the government to outlaw unregistered trade unions and to prevent employers from recognising an unregistered union. The resolution received majority support despite the mass of African, Coloured and Indian workers belonging to these unions.

### **Co-operation With Management**

In 1975 the parallel TUCSA unions claimed a combined membership of 25,000. By 1982 the number had risen to nearly 103,000 African workers. In view of its reactionary role and history, we need to ask how TUCSA succeeds in attracting black unions to such an extent that its African membership has increased fourfold since 1975.

The most important contributory factor is cooperation with management. Employers generally prefer to negotiate with TUCSA unions which they consider to be more moderate than the new emergent and independent unions outside the TUCSA umbrella. Another factor is the government's



clear bias in favour of TUCSA policy and opposition to the newly emergent unions which take up a political stand on issues such as influx control, residential rights, detention of political and trade union activists.

TUCSA rejects what it calls political action. It insists that the job of the trade union is to negotiate with employers on industrial councils and ignore the boring and burdensome issues of the black working class in townships, compounds, barracks and rural areas.

Of TUCSA's 57 unions in 1983, twenty four were fully mixed or non-racial, six were for Africans only, five of these being parallel unions. The remaining 27 consisted of all-white unions or Coloured unions.

The total membership of TUCSA's affiliated unions in 1983 was 478,400:

215,280 — 45% Coloureds & Indians

138,736 — 29% Africans

124,384 — 26% Whites

At the present time whites continue to occupy the "driver's" seat. TUCSA's NEC national executive committee has 30 members of whom no fewer than 21 are white, 2 African, 4 Coloured and 3 Indian. This is an absurd hangover from the days of unchallenged white supremacy and should not be tolerated any longer.

After TUCSA's 1983 conference, three unions — the S.A. Footplate Staff Association, the Concession Stores and Allied Trade Assistants' Union and the S.A. Woodworkers' Union — with a combined membership of 16,200, disaffiliated on the grounds that they could not pay their affiliation fees which had been increased from 5c to 8c a member. More important was the disaffiliation of the 56,000 members of the S.A. Boilermakers' Society whose general secretary, Ike van der Watt, said that TUCSA had lost the confidence of the black workers because it had failed to take a stand on the burning issues facing the workers and was standing in the way of trade union unity.

In 1982 the National Union of Distributive Workers (NUDW) and the Commercial and Allied Workers' Union (CAWU) disaffiliated because TUCSA had distanced itself from the countrywide protest against the killing of trade unionist Dr Neil Aggett in detention.

*The Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU)* was formed in April 1979 by 13 trade unions with 45,190 members. Today it has 9 unions with a membership of about 106,000. FOSATU is frequently criticised because it is apolitical, keeps aloof from the 'community', limits its activities to factory workers, adopts a timid approach to government and politics and allows white academics too much power.

In his address to FOSATU's 1982 conference, general secretary Joe Foster talked of the need for a "workers' movement" and "workers' leadership" because, in his view, "there has not been and is not a working class movement in South Africa". His syndicalist approach and his ignoring of the role and history of the Communist Party in South Africa were well analysed by Toussaint in his article "A Trade Union is Not a Political Party" in *The African Communist* No. 93 Second Quarter 1983.

Basing itself on Marxist-Leninist principles, the Communist Party has from its earliest days in the 1920s made a notable contribution to the organisation of workers into trade unions and laid the foundation for the powerful black trade union movement which is now beginning to pluck the fruits of the heroic efforts and sacrifices of Communist Party members, amongst others, for over 60 years. It is of no benefit to the cause of the workers for Foster and Fosatu to ignore history in this way.

Fosatu has brought about the amalgamation of unions on an industrial basis. Its influence has penetrated into the ranks of TUCSA and it has succeeded in detaching Coloured, Indian and African workers from some of TUCSA's affiliates.

*The Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU)*, a FOSATU affiliate, has a membership of 35,000 and is growing. It accounted for most strikes in 1981, 1982 and 1983 and has won important victories in the sphere of wage increases and reinstatement of retrenched workers. MAWU has grown rapidly because it has articulated the workers' needs and developed shop stewards' councils, facilitating fuller worker participation and internal democracy in the union. In the hostels "they preach unionism to each other the whole night", said a MAWU organiser. MAWU strikers chant "Siyonqoba simunye" (through unity we will win).

MAWU played an important role in a two-day conference on the 13-14th March 1984. The 90 delegates from 10 metal unions resolved to pull their forces together but not into a single body. The 10 unions from 3 union federations have established a full-time secretariat headed by Brian Fredericks of FOSATU. The new local council and secretariat will act to arbitrate in disputes between the member unions, particularly on the touchy issue of 'poaching' members and to promote co-operation on wage demands and other issues facing workers in the industry. The major unions committed to the new Council include the Boilermakers' Society of South Africa, MAWU, NAAWU, CUSA's affiliate the Steel, Allied and Engineering Workers' Union and TUCSA's Engineering and Industrial Workers' Union.

All told the Council-linked unions represent 200,000 workers in the steel, engineering, metal fabrication and automotive industries. The principal foe of this powerful council is the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation (SEIFSA) which represents employers' interests and is no friend of the newer militant black unions, insisting that negotiations must be conducted through Industrial Councils.

Another Fosatu affiliate, the *National Automobile and Allied Workers' Union (NAAWU)* has also grown from strength to strength, winning big wage increases and a reduction in working hours, a reduction in the number of job grades and an increase in annual leave. NAAWU organised 28 strikes in 1982 involving 54,480 workers. Other FOSATU unions which are growing include the *National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW)*, the *Chemical Workers' Industrial Union (CWIU)*, and the *Paper, Wood and Allied Workers' Union (PWAU)*.

CUSA — *Council of Unions of South Africa*, has affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and receives funds from the African-American Labour Centre (AALC), the ICFTU and the Ebert Foundation. Its secretary is Phiroshaw Camay — US-educated with AALC funds. He is often called upon to address employer conferences. On 18-19th November 1983 he addressed the *Financial Mail's* annual international Conference — the meeting place of big business personalities and investment experts on the subject of Investment in 1983. Others present included Horwood, the Minister of Finance; de Kock, Governor of South African Reserve Bank; Harry Oppenheimer and Johannes Stegmann, managing director of SASOL. Right through the years of strikes in 1981, '82 and '83 CUSA unions were not much involved.

CUSA has more than 120,000 members belonging to 11 unions. One of its fastest-growing unions is the *National Union of Mineworkers*, established on July 31, 1982 at Hammanskraal. The NUM has declared that it seeks a new order for the 400,000 African mineworkers and will not rest until all the workers are treated with dignity and respect. It has submitted a memorandum to the Chamber of Mines demanding higher wages, the scrapping of job reservation and general improvement in the conditions of the workers.

According to the report of the general secretary, the NUM recruited its members from 48 mines — phosphates, coal, copper, chrome, refineries and mine hospitals. Of its 55,000 members, 40,000 were drawn from the gold mines, 10,000 from coal mines and 5,000 from other sectors. In June 1983 the

NUM was recognised for the first time by the Chamber of Mines to represent workers at shafts where it could claim between 33% and 40% representation, depending on job category. At the end of March 1984 it was reported that the NUM had over 70,000 members.

The NUM is not the only union organising African miners. Others are the *Black Mining and Construction Workers' Union (BAWU)*, the *Black Mining and Construction Workers' Union (AZAPO)*, the *Black Allied Mine and Tunnel Workers' Union*, the *Federated Mining, Chemical and Explosive Industry Union* with white, Coloured and African members. All these unions have been given access to the mines by the Chamber, and are of course competing with one another to the Chamber's benefit. Only 11% of African miners are organised.

**SAAWU — South African Allied Workers' Union.** In March 1979 a meeting was called to dissolve the Black and Allied Workers' Union (BAWU) and SAAWU was formed. SAAWU is an unregistered trade union body. It sees its task as organising ALL workers. Its policy is one of non-racialism based on workers' unity. It strives to organise workers on the shop floor.

Sam Kikine, general secretary, claimed 26 affiliated unions with a membership of 75,000. Other SAAWU leaders estimate the membership at 20,000. We do not know precisely which are the 26 unions affiliated.

SAAWU was involved in the Wilson-Rowntree dispute. The company and the Sweet Workers' Union affiliated to TUCSA co-operated against SAAWU and the interests of the African workers. SAAWU received support from democratic trade unions, community, student and scholar organisations at home and anti-apartheid groups abroad.

SAAWU is held in high regard by progressives since its heyday in 1981 when there were close ties with AFCWU both in East London and Durban. A succession of strikes took place in East London in which SAAWU was involved. It obtained a substantial sum from ICFTU in 1982.

SAAWU is operating in the heavily repressive environment of Ciskei and has been banned by the Sebe regime. Its leaders and many members were detained and tortured. SAAWU President Thozamile Gqwetha stated: "... exploitation doesn't end in the factory .... we believe trade unionism should extend beyond the shop floor to the squalid conditions we live under in the locations or villages". SAAWU supports the Freedom Charter adopted at the Congress of the People in June 1955 and Gqwetha has stated that: "There can be no other solution for the problems of this country than one based on the Freedom Charter".

At a week-end conference in April 1984 three senior officials were expelled from SAAWU — general secretary Sam Kikine, national organiser Herbert



Barnabas and national treasurer Isaac Ngobe — for alleged unconstitutional behaviour. Thozamile Gqwetha was re-elected president and Sisa Njikelana, formerly vice-president, was elected general secretary. The conference endorsed SAAWU's support for the United Democratic Front and decided that SAAWU's head office be moved from East London to Johannesburg.

**FCWU/AFCWU** — Food and Canning and African Food and Canning Workers' Unions. They are important unions with 28,000 members. One is registered, the other unregistered. They are strong, organised nationally and with a history of militancy and democratic organisation of over 43 years standing.

**CCAWSU** (Clerical, Catering and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa) Close to CUSA camp and is registered. Has grown in Transvaal and appears to have wide worker support. Has won a number of struggles through militant action. Its membership has grown to 30,000. Has conducted many strikes and has become a great fighting force.

**MACWUSA** — Breakaway from the FOSATU affiliated union NAAWU. It is strong only in one factory. It walked out of the unity talks in Wilgespruit over the issue of registered unions and participation in industrial councils.

The mushrooming of general workers' unions is demonstrated by the history of the *General Workers' Union* (GWU), formerly only in the Cape, which has organised stevedoring workers in Cape Town, East London, Port Elizabeth, Durban and won a recognition agreement from the South African Stevedoring Employers' Association, granting full bargaining rights, higher wages and better conditions of work.

GWU is now the recognised representative of stevedores in South Africa's four major ports. GWU has also obtained favourable agreements for workers in engineering plants and has made an effort to organise workers at SATS — South African Transport Services. It has met with strong obstruction from the SATS and from the Federal Council of SATS Staff Associations. The GWU has 18,000 members.

*General Allied Workers' Union* (GAWU) is organising in the Transvaal — exact membership not stated. The same applies to General Workers' Union of South Africa (GWUSA) operating in Port Elizabeth and the Orange Vaal General Workers' Union (OVGWU).

There are other general workers' unions, unregistered, small, with almost no organised worker support. Politically vocal, they have yet to prove themselves as trade unionists.

### **The quest for a federation**

During the past 11 years attempts have been made to establish a federation uniting the new 'independent' unions and the older progressive unions such as the Food and Canning Workers' Union and the African Food and Canning Workers' Union established in the 1940s and with a long and proven track record. In October 1973 the unions which had been established following the wave of strikes in Natal formed the Trade Union Advisory and Co-ordinating Council (TUACC). In 1975 the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) initiated a meeting of union leaders from Transvaal, Natal and the Cape with the idea of establishing a broad trade union centre based on industrial unions and committed to organise the unorganised African mineworkers, metal and transport workers. Due to interference by some academics, the move came to nothing.

SACTU has always favoured the formation of unions on industrial lines, uniting all groups of workers in a single industry, skilled and unskilled, operatives, clerks and cleaners, to advance and defend their common interests in collective bargaining with the same set of employers. However, despite the differences in structure between industrial unions and general workers' unions (which take all corners, something like the old ICU), seven summit meetings of the emergent and progressive unions have been held to seek common ground for unity. The first, in Langa, Cape Town, was in August 1981. The unions agreed to reject industrial councils, that registration under the Industrial Conciliation Act should be no more than a technical measure and resolved to establish ad-hoc regional Solidarity Act Committees (SAC's) to encourage co-operation between unions. That united action was feasible was demonstrated in the nation-wide work stoppage involving 100,000 workers following the death in detention of the FCWU branch Secretary Dr Neil Aggett.

Conferences for trade union unity were convened in April and July 1982, but no progress was made. FOSATU, GWU and AFCWU called for the formation of a new federation, while SAAWU, GAWU and four other unions insisted on the Langa summit type of organisation.

A *Fourth Unity Summit* was convened by GWU in April 1983. A significant step was taken by the progressive trade unions towards establishing trade union unity. The summit was held in Athlone, Cape Town, by AFCWU & FCWU, CCAWUSA, CUSA, FOSATU, GAWU, GWUSA, GWU, SAAWU, OVGWU & MACWUSA. Of these, seven unions agreed to establish a trade union unity feasibility committee — they are AFCWU & FCWU, FOSATU, GWU, SAAWU, CCAWUSA & GAWU. CUSA and

MACWUSA announced that they would consult their membership first. CUSA thereafter joined the Committee.

*A Fifth Unity Summit* was held at the offices of the Cape Town Municipal Workers' Association (CTMWA) in 1983. Present were CTMWA, FOSATU, MACWUSA, SAAWU, GWUSA, GWU, CUSA, Municipal General Workers' Union, FCWU and CAWU. This meeting was called to work out structures for a new federation.

**National Congress** — It was agreed that the national congress should be the highest policy-making body. Debated heavily was the proposition that representation at the national congress should be according to membership. Some unions felt that paid-up membership is necessary to encourage maintenance of certain standards in workers' organisation. Other unions felt that paid-up membership was not true proof of a union's organisation or workers' participation.

The question of voting rights for officials was also given much attention.

**Demarcation** — there was a call for industrial unions only to make up the federation. Other unions argued for general workers' unions provided there was demarcation, with unions specifying in which industry they were organising. It was agreed to call for a written statement from each union to outline where they are organising and that a committee be established to resolve disputes over demarcation. The aim was to establish broadly based industrial national unions.

*Sixth Unity Talks.* A meeting of the Feasibility Committee took place on the 10th November 1983. There was a strong feeling that to achieve the envisaged unity, unions should be industrially based and general workers' unions should be phased out. The unions undertook to submit by January statements of their membership. This was not done by GAWU, GWUSA, MACWUSA, MGWU and GWU.

In March 1984 however the *7th unity talks* took place — the representatives of FOSATU, CUSA, CCAWUSA, CTMWA, FCWU, AFCWU and GWU met in Johannesburg and agreed to form a new embracing Federation of Trade Unions. The summit had also been attended by SAAWU, GAWU and MGWUSA (Municipal and General Workers' Union of South Africa), but they walked out of the talks after it had been decided that they should have observer status only because they were not properly structured. In a joint statement issued after the meeting, the majority declared:

"The federation planned will be one of industrially demarcated unions with the aim of having one union per industry. Those unions not demarcated along industrial lines or which have not yet formed industrial unions are not yet ready to join the federation".

However, at a press conference the three excluded unions emphasised their commitment to unity and the concept of industrially based unions, but said the transformation of existing federations and general unions required immense human and material resources and would take time to achieve. The three were to report back to their membership and decide whether to accept observer status or demand full participation status.

This split in the progressive trade union movement, which plays into the hands of the state, the employers and the reactionaries in the trade union movement, must be overcome. Greater patience must be employed to sort out differences and form an alliance which will strengthen the organised force of the working class. Let us remember that, despite the massive rise in black membership of registered unions during the period 1981-83, fewer than 20% of the black work force are organised. 1.3 million farm workers employed by 70,000 farmers, the most neglected labour source in the country, are unorganised, exposed to many abuses, with no rights to organise and no welfare legislation to protect them, no pensions or unemployment insurance, and widespread use of child labour. Others who are gravely neglected are the 260,000 domestic workers. And to all these must be added the millions of unemployed, living in conditions of absolute wretchedness and degradation.

For all these reasons a united and strong progressive trade union force is essential, and all the power of the liberation movement must be employed to bring about the unity which is needed.

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# **WOMEN ARISE AND FIGHT FOR PEOPLE'S POWER!**

**By Mosadi wa Sechaba**

The ANC's declaration of 1984 as the Year of the Women is a challenge to all of us in the South African liberation movement to concretely grasp the place of the struggle for the emancipation of women within the national democratic revolution. We must understand what we mean by the emancipation of women, why it is a vital part of our overall struggle and what our movement must do in order to ensure that the women's struggle is effectively integrated into the liberation struggle to strengthen and enrich it.

Within our movement and within the mass democratic movement in South Africa, there has been a resurgence in recent years of political activity oriented towards grappling with these crucial issues. We have a rich and proud history on this front and the recent period has seen exciting advances being achieved. But in this Year of the Women, it is necessary to assess whether our strategy and tactics are equipping us maximally to mobilise and organise our women in their millions into a mighty contingent of our revolutionary forces that can play a decisive role in destroying apartheid and beginning to build the people's South Africa of the Freedom Charter. In taking stock of our successes, we must ask whether we are activating women in sufficient numbers and in such a way that their contribution is a sustained one and an expression of their full potential. In order to tap the full revolutionary energy of South African women, we must carefully investigate and analyse what obstacles, objective and subjective, stand in our way and where necessary revise our strategy and tactics so as to overcome these obstacles.

The struggle for the emancipation of women will not be completed during this phase of our struggle and even after the seizure of power by the people a



long road will still have to be travelled to complete this process. Lenin wrote that:

"... It is the chief task of the working women's movement to fight for economic and social equality, and not only formal equality, for women. The chief thing is to get women to take part in socially productive labour, to liberate them from 'domestic slavery', to free them from their stupefying and humiliating subjugation to the eternal drudgery of the kitchen and the nursery. This struggle will be a long one and it demands a radical reconstruction both of social technique and of morals. But it will end in the complete triumph of communism."<sup>1</sup>

The advanced position of women in the socialist countries demonstrates concretely what can be achieved. They are the only countries to have created complete legal equality for women and have made great strides in turning formal equality into a social reality. To allow women to participate in all spheres of society, day care facilities for infants and children are provided. Housework is mechanised as much as possible. Political work is done to encourage men to share housework. Women play a far greater role in production and public life than in any of the capitalist countries — but the socialist countries believe that there is still much to be done, especially to increase the participation of women at the level of state management.

Ho Chi Minh wrote in 1952:

"What equality between the sexes really means is a thorough-going and difficult revolution, because contempt for women dates back thousands of years. It is deep-rooted in the thoughts and attitudes of everyone, in family life and in all social classes. It cannot be done away with by force. If this large-scale revolution is to be successful, progress will have to be made in every field — political, economic, cultural and legal. This revolution must involve heart-searching by each one of us and it must involve the whole people . . ."<sup>2</sup>

The Indo-Chinese Communist Party which led the national democratic revolution in Vietnam defined achieving equality between the sexes as one of the ten fundamental tasks of the revolution when it was formed in 1930. The Party regarded this as a means of drawing women into the struggle, which was the only way to ensure equality for women after liberation. It recognised that special political work had to be done among women. Intensive political training and drawing women into leading organs were regarded as necessary in order to develop leadership among women.

While we learn from the experiences of other struggles, we must focus very closely on the specific conditions of South African women, how we plan to mobilise them effectively, what our goals are at this stage and what our long-term perspective is. The historic campaigns of our women stand out as beacons in our struggle. It is essential for us to analyse and assess the strengths and weaknesses of these campaigns and the lessons from them for

our movement today. This will provide us with the required political grasp of the issues involved in the mobilisation of women and enable us to strengthen the role of women as an integral part of our liberation struggle. The necessity for women to be well-armed with a politically conscious identification with our movement is highlighted in a remark of Lenin to Clara Zetkin: 'If the women are not with us, the counter-revolutionaries may succeed in setting them against us.'

### **The Specific Conditions of South African Women**

The existence within our liberation movement in its long history of organisations such as the Bantu Women's League, the ANC Women's League, the Federation of South African Women and the present Women's Section of the ANC is an organisational expression of the extra oppression of women under apartheid. They share with men class exploitation and national oppression, but carry the added burden of oppression as women. Family life is destroyed by apartheid, leaving a large number of women as heads of households under impossible conditions of poverty. In total contradiction to their real conditions such women are treated as minors by the law. In the specific conditions of apartheid, this has devastating effects on women.

- The migrant labour system is designed to maintain the lowest possible wages by separating the worker from the family unit which, according to apartheid theory, subsists on the land in the bantustans. In practice this means that predominantly men are employed as wage labourers in the urban industrial centres and the bulk of women are relegated as superfluous appendages to the bantustans — backward, undeveloped areas, overcrowded and characterised by malnutrition, disease and death. Eking out the most meagre survival is a losing battle. It is a vital task for our movement to reach and mobilise ever greater numbers of the millions of isolated and destitute women in the bantustans. The fact that women constitute the bulk of the rural population is a crucial factor for our strategy in the difficult task of raising the level of resistance there.

- Those women who break out of the bantustans and go to live in the urban centres again come face-to-face with the extra oppression of women under apartheid. They are still regarded as superfluous appendages by the regime. They have no prospects of getting housing legally in the overcrowded townships. Wherever they go — to the single sex hostels where some of their husbands are, to shacks in the yards of township people, or to squatter camps consisting of self-built shelters pieced together from any available scrap —

they are 'illegal' and liable at any time to arrest, imprisonment and banishment. In the squatter camps, their mass, united resistance to this has unleashed on them vicious repression by the state — shelters are bulldozed, the women are attacked by dogs, baton-charged and tear-gassed and the threat of armed force is ever-present. Women are thus the prime targets of pass arrests, forced removals and being dumped in barren backwaters, often in a part of the country quite unknown to them where people are strangers to one another. This renders them disoriented and alienated.

- The insecurity of 'illegal' women makes them an ideal source of cheap labour. They tend to get the most menial, worst-paid jobs. Unemployment is much higher among women than among men. Women get lower wages for equal work. They lose their jobs if they get pregnant. They are sexually harassed at work. Their participation in union activity is inhibited because of their double working day. When they leave the factory, they have to cook, clean, wash clothes and look after the children. They face negative attitudes from male fellow workers who often regard them as inferior and belonging in the home, not the union. Some resent women for undercutting them by working for lower wages — a case of obviously misdirected anger, but nevertheless widespread. Husbands often object to their participation in unions, complaining that women workers are duty-bound to be at home and minister to the needs of the family. The high incidence of rape and assault in the townships makes many women afraid of being on the streets at night and once again this inhibits their participation in unions.

- Many women can find employment only as domestic workers. This reinforces the prejudice that women are fit only for housework and denies them any opportunity for acquiring different skills through being employed, limited as this may be for black workers under apartheid. More importantly, domestic workers are deprived of the benefit of the socialisation of labour which brings workers together in large numbers and lays the basis for workers collectively confronting and uniting in struggle against the exploitative conditions they are subjected to. Domestic workers are often 'illegals' too and suffer from the same insecurity and vulnerability as their factory-employed counterparts. Their isolation is increased by the fact that they frequently live in the back yards of their employers and do not even have the chance of participating in the community struggles of the townships.

- Another major category of employment for women is as labourers on the white-owned farms. Here they have the benefit of a collective presence, but the dire poverty and semi-serfdom of these workers are obstacles to their organisation. Although in one sense they are less isolated than domestic workers, they are nevertheless isolated because they do not have access to

a wider community and rural conditions mean that the population is dispersed. The brute force farmers use to control their workforce is often hidden from the world because of the relative 'invisibility' of the rural areas. It is very difficult for outsiders to penetrate the prison-like conditions on the farms and mobilise resistance or support resistance already there.

Hence women experience the poverty and deprivation of apartheid, its brutal and rigid control of people's lives, even more harshly because they are women. The very nature of their additional oppression as women makes it more difficult for them to resist. Clearly a non-racial, fully democratic South Africa as envisaged in the Freedom Charter is in their interests. The emancipation of women to a position of full legal and social equality, with the full participation of women in all spheres of society at every level is a vital part of the domestic transformation of South African society our movement is fighting to achieve. In order to ensure that this aspect of our national democratic revolution is carried out, we must develop a political programme that will galvanise the masses of our women into conscious struggle; we must break through their isolation by mobilising them on the basis of their concrete conditions and through this create understanding of how their misery is caused by apartheid, which they must fight to destroy. Special political work recognising the specific oppression of women has to be done in order to bring women effectively into the struggle.

Lenin emphasised this in his discussions with Clara Zetkin. He said:

'... the struggle for women's rights must also be linked with our principal aim — the conquest of power and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. At present, this is, and will continue to be our alpha and omega. That is clear, absolutely clear. But the broad masses of working women will not feel irresistibly drawn to the struggle for state power if we harp on just this one demand, even though we may blare it forth on the trumpets of Jericho. No, a thousand times no! We must combine our appeal politically in the minds of the female masses with the sufferings, the needs and the wishes of the working women. They should all know what the proletarian dictatorship will mean to them — complete equality of rights with men, both legal and in practice, in the family, the state and in society, and that it also spells the annihilation of the power of the bourgeoisie.'

### **The perspective of the South African Liberation Movement on Women's Emancipation**

The perspective of our movement on women's emancipation is on record. The Freedom Charter enshrines equal rights for women in the spheres of voting, government and administration and specifies that women must receive equal pay for equal work and that working mothers should have maternity leave on full pay. *The Road to South African Freedom*, programme of



the South African Communist Party adopted in 1962, as part of its 'Immediate Proposals' deals with the position of women in the section headed 'Labour and Social Welfare'. It states:

'... all workers, including farm, mine and domestic workers (should) be entitled to full trade union rights and protection of labour laws... The Party demands that the state provide special protection for women workers, the removal of all restrictions against married women employees, and the provision of adequate maternity leave before and after birth. The Party will fight for full and equal rights for women in every aspect of state, social and private life. It will work for the elimination of polygamy. It will fight vigorously against all vestiges and manifestations of contempt for, or unequal treatment of women, or their being regarded as mere cooks, domestic servants, nannies and housekeepers. It will fight for the admission of women on an equal basis to every sphere of state, industrial, commercial, agricultural, scientific, academic and professional life...'

In 1955, the National Executive of the ANC highlighted the importance of the role of women in the liberation struggle, the importance of their emancipation for the achievement of true democracy and the need to mobilise them by means of special political work. At the annual national conference in December 1955, it declared:

'... The Women's League has grown rapidly. Our women are proving themselves brave and undaunted politicians. Yet the women need special attention and training to assist them to become leaders of the people. The women's League is not just an auxiliary to the African National Congress, and we know that we cannot win liberation or build a strong movement without the participation of the women. We must therefore make it possible for women to play their part in the liberation movement by regarding them as equals, and helping to emancipate them in the home, even relieving them of their many family and household burdens so that women may be given an opportunity of being politically active. The men in the Congress movement must fight constantly in every possible way those outmoded customs which make women inferior and by personal example must demonstrate their belief in the equality of all human beings, of both sexes...'

In 1981, the ANC Women's Section held a historic conference in Luanda. At the close of the conference, President Tambo stated:

'... Women in the ANC should stop behaving as if there was no place for them above the level of certain categories of involvement. They have a duty to liberate us men from antique concepts and attitudes about the place and role of women in society and in the development and direction of our revolutionary struggle. The oppressor has, at best, a lesser duty to liberate the oppressed than the oppressed himself. The struggle to conquer oppression in our country is the weaker for the traditionalist, conservative and primitive restraints imposed on women by man-dominated structures within our movement, as also because of equally traditionalist attitudes of surrender and submission on the part of women. We need to move from revolutionary declarations to revolutionary practice.

'We invite the ANC Women's Section, and the black women of South Africa,



more oppressed and more exploited than any section of the population, to take up this challenge and assume their proper role, outside the kitchen, among the fighting ranks of our movement and at its command posts. The Women's Section is not an end in itself. It is a weapon of struggle, to be correctly used, against all forms and levels of oppression and inequality in the interests of a victorious struggle of our people . . .'

And in 1983, the head of the ANC Women's Section, Comrade Gertrude Shope, stated: 'Our main priority is the political development of our women, which will ensure their full participation in the liberation of our country.'

These policy statements highlight the crucial issues involved in the women's struggle of South Africa.

1. The full participation of women is needed for the victory of our liberation struggle.
2. This will only happen as the result of special political work directed at women.
3. The ANC Women's Section is the force within our movement that must spearhead this work. In order to carry it out, the political development of women is an urgent priority. Leadership among women has to be developed by the movement.

### **Current Development in the South African Women's Struggle**

The united action of the democratic forces in South Africa is a fundamental precondition for the victory of our revolution. In this Year of the Women, a major challenge is to build a national, mass-based democratic women's movement that is organisationally and politically united. Currently there are a number of regional democratic women's organisations. For example, the Federation of South African Women has been revived on the Rand; the United Women's Organisation is active mainly in the Western Cape; very newly-formed organisations are the Natal Organisation of Women and the Port Elizabeth Women's Organisation.

Women have been at the forefront of squatter struggles and action against rising rents, food prices and bus fares. Women's struggles, like those of many groups within the communities of the oppressed in our country, are often a response to a burning local issue. After a particular campaign, the momentum may be lost and some participants may fade off the political scene. This is not peculiar to women's actions and the reason for this is not to be found in the nature of women. It is partly because of the repressive conditions in South Africa and may also reflect a limited political perspective. Our movement has to strive continually to harness the anger of our people, expressed in localised campaigns of resistance, into a sustained, organised, national onslaught on the whole apartheid system. This is why on the women's front the chief political task is the building of a national democratic women's movement.

The regional women's organisations are precisely striving to build structures to keep women active and to link women with other people's organisations. Many of them are affiliated to the United Democratic Front. They are striving to encourage the participation of women in other organisations and are tackling the obstacles to women's participation by organising child care facilities and raising the question of housework as a brake on women's participation. The trade union, youth and students' organisations are all taking up these women's issues. Here are a few examples:

- The Commercial Catering and Allied Workers' Union recently negotiated a maternity leave agreement with OK Bazaars, a milestone achievement.

- The Federation of South African Trade Unions held a discussion on women workers in July 1983. Women trade unionists articulated the difficulties of being active because of housework and attitudes of husbands and male workers. When a man present insisted that it was traditional for women to do all housework and unacceptable for men to do any, a woman worker said:

'We can't depend on what our forefathers did. There were no unions then. It is high time we change. We must have equal rights. No one is inferior. We are all equals.'

Other men and women supported her, saying that men as co-creators of children should share child care and that women must have equal opportunity in society and should be equally involved in the struggle, taking up leadership positions. It was suggested that workers should struggle for shorter hours for all, so that men would have more time to help with housework. If women's issues are not taken up, it was felt, employers will undercut male jobs by employing cheaper female labour.

- The Soweto Youth Congress has set up a Women's Committee which aims 'to instil a spirit of equality among all members', to overcome women's feelings of inferiority and develop, as a priority, leadership and participation among young women. It plans to study women in the struggle and the Women's Charter adopted at the inaugural conference of the Federation of South African Women in 1954.

- The Azanian Students' Organisation (Azaso) has this year appointed for the first time a national women's organiser to increase women's involvement in the organisation. In August 1982 it was reported that Azaso was concerned about the general lack of participation of women in the people's organisations. Women share the oppression of the community and workers, it felt, but are 'also oppressed by the sexist attitudes of our society'. Women

are brought up to believe that they are inferior to men and must be passive and subordinate. They have little legal protection and constitute a large part of the unemployed. The Cosas/Azaso-sponsored Education Charter campaign has issued a preliminary set of demands that have so far been expressed — one of them is the elimination of sexism from South African education. The National Union of South African Students (Nusas) organised a conference on women in 1982 which examined women's participation in different areas of our struggle.

- Popular recognition of the importance of the women's struggle is reflected in the regular occurrence over the past few years of well-attended National Women's Day meetings in all parts of our country.

Thus there is an increasing focus on women's role in our struggle in South Africa. Stickers declaring 'Makhosikazi vukani!/Tsogang Basadi!' give concrete expression to the spirit of the Year of the Women. Albertina Sisulu, outstanding leader of our people and veteran of the women's struggle, observed in 1981: 'In the fifties women's participation was higher than their level of consciousness whereas today people are more aware but participation has declined.' She added that awareness among our rural women must increase and women's organisations must mobilise there.

These developments on the women's front reflect a growing awareness among our people of the importance of increasing the scale of mobilisation of women as part of our overall liberation struggle. Clearly a giant task awaits us.

### **What is to be done**

Within our movement, the Women's Section of the ANC is tackling this giant task with the support of the entire movement. Women in every corner of our country, no matter how remote or isolated, must be recruited into the underground of our movement. Our broad strategy for the mobilisation of women must ensure that every group of women is reached — in the bantustans, on the white-owned farms, in squatter camps, townships, factories, in schools and colleges, and in the churches. Propaganda in the form of leaflets, radio broadcasts, articles in *Mayibuye*, *Sechaba*, *The African Communist* and *Dawn* must be stepped up, with the ANC Women's Section organ, the *Voice of Women*, as ever having a leading role to play.

Women should be mobilised by making them realise that our national democratic revolution will free them not only from national oppression and class exploitation, but also from oppression as women. This will give them an extra motivation for joining the struggle. Women should be made aware that

they are expected to contribute at every level in every trench of our struggle — in the military as well as the mass political struggle — as leaders and activists and not as mere supporters and sympathisers. The Women's Section must, as Comrade Shope said, treat the political development of women as a priority. Politically conscious women cadres working among the masses of our women, like yeast in bread, can activate them in the manner demanded in this Year of the Women. Leadership among women must be developed by the political work of our movement.

Our movement also has the task of educating men about the importance of women's emancipation and how this is a vital part of our freedom struggle. Everyone should understand that when we speak of the emancipation of women, we are not speaking of a struggle of women against men, but of the struggle of men and women against injustice and inequality. Ensuring that women play an equal part in our liberation struggle strengthens us; it means that women can act more effectively in unity with men to achieve a speedier victory. All of us in the movement must strive in every way possible to support the Women's Section of the ANC in its vital work and to strengthen and build it. Throughout the movement we should discuss the significance of this Year of the Women, study the history of our women's struggle, study the historic Women's Charter and collectively contribute to the political programme of mass mobilisation of our women.

**LET US MAKE THIS YEAR OF THE WOMEN THE LAUNCHING  
PAD FOR EVER-INCREASING WOMEN'S RESISTANCE!**

**VUKANI MAKHOSIKAZI!**

**TSOGANG BASADI!**

**WOMEN ARISE AND FIGHT FOR PEOPLE'S POWER!**

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# **AFRICA NOTES** **AND COMMENT**

**By Du Bois**

## **SUDAN: End the one-man dictatorship!**

There was a moment in the history of post-colonial Sudan when the country was poised on the brink of a brighter future for all its peoples, southerners and northerners, Moslems and Christians. That was when the armed forces, led by Gaafar Mohamed Nimeiri, seized power in May, 1969. There was hope that the tide of anti-popular measures and the steady drift toward neo-colonial dependence adopted by successive regimes since independence in 1956 would be reversed. There was hope too that the divisive civil war would be ended and a just and lasting basis would be found to settle the national question which divided north and south of the country on what appeared to be regional, ethnic and religious grounds.

There was both a social and political base which fed this hope — the wide range of social and class forces and their organisations which had fought the previous anti-popular, feudal and neo-colonial regimes. The Communist Party of Sudan was a leading force in this struggle, as were the democratic trade unions, workers, youth and women's organisations. The Party's policy was based on the principle of "critical support" for the regime of the military — to support the soldiers in measures aimed in favour of the people and the country, to fight against any moves in the contrary direction. The Party correctly saw that both tendencies existed within the armed forces and sought to strengthen the democratic, progressive and revolutionary tendency.

In a very short space of time the democratic movement of Sudan took giant steps in the process of reconstructing the country. A number of the Party's



leading members gained places in the Council of Ministers set up in parallel with the Revolutionary Council of the Armed Forces to shape policy. Political and economic measures were adopted to wrench Sudan from the crisis of neo-colonial dependence. Banks and other major financial institutions were nationalised; import and export trade was brought under state control; companies vital to the country's strategic economic development were nationalised and state control was introduced over strategic economic resources.

The war in the south was brought to an end and a Ministry of Southern Affairs was created headed by Joseph Garang, a member of the Party's Central Committee, to work out a policy of regional autonomy — "the building of a broad socialist-oriented democratic movement in the South, forming part of the revolutionary structure in the North and capable of assuming the reins of power in that region and rebuffing imperialist penetration and infiltration". This was the basis of the 1972 Addis Ababa Agreement which granted regional autonomy to southern Sudan.

Internationally, Sudan moved closer to the Non-Aligned Movement, the socialist countries and the OAU. This was the Sudan which hosted the first international conference in solidarity with the struggle of the peoples of South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau — the historic Khartoum Conference of 1969. Yet even as this momentous process was in progress counter-revolution and reaction were plotting ceaselessly with none other than Nimeiri as their leading figure. The free development of popular democracy and organisations was constantly being hampered. Nimeiri wanted one great political movement — the Sudanese Socialist Union — to be the only political organisation. The Party refused to disband and abandon its vanguard role and Nimeiri began accusing the party of plotting his overthrow. The May revolution was fast reaching an impasse. Something had to give.

In the event, it was the revolutionary wing of the armed forces which struck to remove the drift toward a one-man dictatorship. In July, 1971 they removed Nimeiri from power. But the emergent revolutionary power had no time to consolidate its positions. Three days later, Nimeiri was back in power aided by sections of the army and foreign intrigue. The democratic movement was decimated in a bloody reprisal of enormous proportions. All political opposition was banned. Worse still, scores of communists and progressives were brutally murdered. Among these were Joseph Garang, Abdul Khalik Mahgoub, the Party's General Secretary, and Shafieh Ahmed Sheik, the Secretary-General of the Sudanese Workers' Union.

This was the beginning of Nimeiri's one-man dictatorship over Sudan. The years since then have seen a decisive corrosion of the gains of that brief early period.

Today, the problems and crisis which the democratic movement of May, 1969 attempted to solve, have become more entrenched. Private enterprise, foreign investment and neo-colonial dependence have plunged the Sudan deeper into an economic quagmire. Whilst a handful of foreign and local capitalists have reaped great profits and power from this process, the mass of Sudanese workers and peasants have been driven deeper into want and poverty. Successive years of trade deficits (approximately 350 million dollars in 1982) have meant greater reliance on the international finance institutions of imperialist control such as the IMF which has promised the Nimeiri regime another standby loan of 237 million dollars to bail it out of its present crisis. IMF loans are not given to uplift the economic conditions of the mass of the working people. On the contrary they always result in cuts in the real earnings of the workers and poor peasants, loss of jobs and greater reliance on foreign capital and finance. Economic mismanagement and corruption have also plunged the agricultural sector, which accounts for 90% of foreign earnings and 40% of the country's gross domestic product, into a serious crisis. Cotton production has plummeted from 1.2 million bales in 1976 to a meagre 600,000 in 1978, and the country is heavily dependent on imports of fertilisers and spare parts for farming equipment. This has meant more borrowing and Sudan's national debt today is estimated to be in the region of 7.8 billion dollars. The brunt of this debt burden will be borne by the workers and peasants.

Genuine non-aligned principles have also disappeared. The Nimeiri regime is tied hand and foot to the global strategies of US imperial interests, especially as they relate to Africa. At the behest of the United States the Nimeiri regime armed and trained the counter-revolution led by Hissein Habre against the legitimate government of Chad — the GUNT. The Sudan is playing a key role, at the instance of US imperialism, to create a strategic military alliance in the Horn of Africa with Somalia, Kenya and Djibouti. Nimeiri and present-day Egypt are numbered amongst the reactionaries in the struggle against Israel and imperialism in the Arab world.

For services rendered, Nimeiri receives large chunks of US handouts. Last year this amounted to 200 million dollars in "aid" — 43 million of which was earmarked for military purposes. For 1985 the US Administration has announced an "aid" package of 271 million dollars for the Sudan — 25% of this will be for direct military expenditure.

### **North-South Division**

What has also been jettisoned is the process of North-South integration intended to enable the southern movement to form "part of the revolutionary structure in the north and capable of assuming the reins of power in that region". Regional autonomy for the South has been more of a formality than a reality. Real power is still vested in the hands of the Nimeiri dictatorship. The main problems of political powerlessness and economic underdevelopment still persist.

Over the last year or so there has been a resurgence of the guerrilla struggle in the Southern region ignited by a number of unpopular measures introduced by Nimeiri. Firstly, the Southern Sudan government was arbitrarily abolished and the region carved up into three provinces. This effectively was an abandonment of the Addis Agreement and an attempt to divide the southern region so as to control it more effectively from Khartoum. Secondly, the Nimeiri administration changed the country's constitution without consulting the people, least of all the Southerners, to transform the Sudan into an Islamic state. Henceforth the tenets of Islamic Sharia will be the basis of rule in the Sudan. For the peoples of the South, the vast majority of whom are Christians and non-Muslims, this move has been seen as an attempt to impose cultural colonialism on them. And this further fanned the flames of resistance.

The third factor is the way in which the regime has handled the oil discovery. Although the deposits have been discovered in the south, no consultation or discussion of the prospects of oil revenue distribution has taken place. These are estimated at around 200 million dollars a year initially and could fuel to a large measure the country's economic development. Politically, economically and culturally the southern peoples have felt that the regime has not only neglected them, but has indeed attempted to impose a form of colonialism against which the original Anyanya guerrilla movement fought successive Sudanese regimes since independence.

An estimated 2,000-3,000 trained army personnel have already deserted, many of them high-ranking officers, to the ranks of the guerrilla movements. There have been mutinies in the southern barracks, attacks on oil exploration and other foreign workers engaged in prospecting and development and a growing tide of military activity. Two clear movements have appeared among the guerrillas: the Anyanya II and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The former's policy of resistance appears to have as its objective secession from the North and the creation of an independent national state. The SPLA, led by Colonel John Garang, have rejected the

secessionist aims of Anyanya and view the struggle against the dictatorship as a national struggle of all Sudanese, Northerners and Southerners, Muslims and others. To what degree the armed revolt will spread, or take one line or the other, is difficult to judge at the moment. If the guerrilla movement in the south can fuse with the rising opposition to the Nimeiri dictatorship in the north, then it is clear that the days of the one-man dictatorship are numbered.

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### **MOROCCO: Bread and Peace**

In January this year the people of Morocco took to the streets in their thousands in defiance of the king, his army and the IMF. In what came to be known as the "bread riots", scores of the poor were killed by the army in major cities of the country. The roots of the present confrontation can be traced directly to the economic strains imposed on the people by the IMF and the unpopular war against the Polisario movement in western Sahara.

In August last year King Hassan's regime negotiated another of many loans from the IMF. The usual conditions were attached to the granting of the loan — austerity, which simply means a drop in the living standards of the workers and the poor and cuts in their real earnings and social services. The net result was that the price of basic foodstuffs sky-rocketed: sugar went up by 18%, domestic oil by 30%, butter by 67%, flour by 35% with no prospects of greater earnings to offset these price rises. The consequence was the "bread riots" which shook the regime to the point where the king had to order his administration to drop all plans for price rises. But not before scores of civilians had been killed and many more arrested on charges of being subversive communist and zionist agents.

The Communist Party of Morocco, which last year celebrated its fortieth anniversary, refuted the charge that the Party had incited the confrontation. It pointed out that the many communist cadres who had joined the people did so because of the severe economic conditions imposed on the masses as a result of the reactionary policies of the Hassan regime.

This was not the first time that popular discontent had spilled out into the streets. There were serious confrontations in the form of strikes and demonstrations in 1965 and again in 1981. The root cause has been the same.

Unemployment, even from official sources, has been chronic. More than 40% of the population is estimated to be living below the poverty line. In the last year alone the cost of living has risen by some 15% and food production has deteriorated to the point where Morocco has to rely on food imports. At the same time the price of phosphates, the source of the country's main foreign earnings, has fallen by some 30% over the last two years. As a consequence the Moroccan regime has resorted to more borrowing, primarily from the IMF and other international capitalist organs. Today, Morocco is one of the most heavily indebted countries in the world with some 11 billion dollars of unpaid debts. Like all countries based on the unequal distribution of wealth, it is the poor who pay the price of economic dependence.

What has added fuel to the fire of discontent has been the war against the Polisario. The war budget now consumes some 40% of the budget and is estimated to be costing the country over a million dollars a day. The war is escalating in intensity with serious repercussions for the peoples of Morocco, the western Sahara and the OAU.

It will be remembered that it was the issue of recognition of the Polisario Front which was used by Morocco, instigated and encouraged by American imperialism, in an attempt to wreck the Tripoli Summit of the OAU.

The Polisario Front has now been engaged in a war of national liberation and for the right to self-determination ever since Spain, the former colonial power, made a secret agreement with Morocco and Mauritania to withdraw from the territory and allow these two countries to carve up the territory between them, irrespective of the wishes of the people. In February, 1976 the Polisario Front proclaimed their independence as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) and has since fought for recognition through diplomatic and armed struggle. In 1978 Mauritania was forced to abandon its claims over the territory. But Morocco has persisted in its annexationist policy. In 1982 the majority of OAU countries recognised the independent Republic of Western Sahara, but the Moroccan regime has persistently violated the demands of the OAU for a ceasefire, direct negotiations with the representatives of the SADR and a national referendum. Instead, it has attempted to impose its own internal solution over the region through a referendum which would exclude participation by the Polisario Front.

Recently, in August, 1983, opposition to the Moroccan king's designs was stiffened by three OAU states — Algeria, Mali and Mauritania, who issued a joint statement that no referendum would be acceptable unless there was a ceasefire and direct talks between Morocco and the Polisario. Senegal and Guinea have also come out in support of this OAU position.



There can be no legitimate reason for any OAU member state to resist this demand — now voiced by the majority of the countries in Africa. Morocco and its allies need to be resolutely rebuffed. The representatives of the SADR must take their legitimate place among the independent nations of Africa at the next OAU Summit.

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### **PANA: Information Decolonisation**

Ten years after an OAU Summit agreed on the necessity of establishing an all-African news agency, the Pan-African News Agency (PANA) has finally come on-stream. The real impetus toward concretising the establishment and work of PANA was given by the conference of OAU Ministers of Information held in Addis Ababa in 1979. The main reason for the creation of the agency was to counter the overwhelming predominance of western controlled news and information being disseminated in the countries of Africa and to set up an alternate pool which would serve the needs of "the consolidation of the independence, unity and solidarity of Africa" and to provide more information about and assist in the struggle against racism, apartheid, colonialism, neo-colonialism and zionism. In this respect one of the beneficiaries of the agency's services and facilities will undoubtedly be the liberation movements in southern Africa — SWAPO and the ANC. The efforts of *Sechaba*, the Namibian liberation press and *The African Communist* as the authentic organs of policy, decisions and information about the liberation struggles in our countries will be greatly enhanced and speeded up by the rapid dissemination of information by PANA.

The headquarters of the Agency is in Dakar, Senegal with four regional centres — Libya (north), Nigeria (West), Sudan (East) and Zambia (South). The agency will transmit in three languages — English, Arabic and French. Each country will transmit information to one of the four regional centres from where it will be relayed to Dakar which will transmit it across the continent.

There can be no doubt that this step by Africa is one of the most important and in line with the creation of the OAU and the Economic Commission for Africa. Our sources of information about each country on the continent have for too long been the major western news agencies and journals printed in

Europe whose sole purpose has been the provision of news and information supporting a capitalist world view and primarily for profits. This is not to deny that the agency will face a number of problems of a political nature. After all, nothing will prevent oppressive regimes from using the agency to supply or suppress information not totally consonant with the realities of their countries. This, like the problem of the development of real independence — political and economic — in each country has to be tackled by the peoples themselves. What is of overriding importance is that the establishment of the agency does represent a giant step forward in the struggle for information decolonisation in Africa.

It is a struggle which has gained world-wide prominence in the last few years, as the developing countries have come to accept that any development strategy has of necessity to include a national information and communications element without which the ideas, values, systems and perceptions created by outside agencies will become the dominant ones. And this flow of directional information has for a long time been one-way — from the centres of imperialism, which for many years held sway over most of the under-developed countries through direct colonial rule, and which today are attempting to perpetuate this domination through neo-colonial methods.

### **New Information Order**

The significance placed on this struggle is manifested by recent conferences, seminars and events organised by the United Nations, the non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

The essence of this struggle and process is encapsulated in the UNESCO sponsored International Programme for the Development of Communications, a programme which has come to be known as the New International Order. This is seen by many of the under-developed and socialist countries as paralleling the efforts to establish the New Economic Order to counter the power of the capitalist countries in the field of economic relations.

At the Media Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement held in New Delhi in December, 1983 the issue of who controls the flow of information, the character and purpose of the information and the relationship between information policy and national economic, ideological and cultural development as it relates to each country came under sharp scrutiny. The Non-Aligned Movement has an important historical role in this sphere. At

its Fourth Summit Conference in Algiers in 1973 it proclaimed the urgent necessity for the creation of the New Information Order. It initiated the struggle for information decolonisation. The Delhi Conference established, among other things, the inseparable link between the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism and the fight for a new balance in world information. Information workers — journalists, television reporters and presenters, writers and other media workers have the responsibility and duty to correct the disjointed, often false and distorted images and information emanating from the western controlled media and agencies. The Transnational Corporations, active in the field of telecommunications and other media of information, were correctly seen as instruments of international finance-capital and neo-colonialism.

The key to understanding why the United States Administration of Reagan has threatened to pull out of UNESCO lies in the unremitting efforts of this organisation to give substance to the efforts of the majority of the countries of the world for a New Information Order. Against this, the Reagan Administration has promoted the idea that this process will hinder the "free flow of information".

Who are they kidding? It is precisely through the smokescreen of the so-called "free flow of information" that the minds of millions of people throughout the world are being shaped to respect US imperial interests, the sanctity of private property, vitriolic anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism and the so-called superiority of the free enterprise system of capitalism. This apart, millions of people are being subjected through these western controlled information media about the superiority of western culture and values.

It is precisely because the need for a change has come to be recognised with urgent force that the governments and peoples of the overwhelming majority have come out against cultural and information imperialism. Africa has made a great beginning in this struggle. The obstacles and dangers on this road are many and cannot be minimised, least of all the fierce resistance by imperialism and the TNC's who profit by their monopoly of the information technology. But the time for a start was urgent and PANA is seen as the beginning of the process of media decolonisation, as part of the struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism on our continent.

## 100 Years of Imperialism

# THE BERLIN CONFERENCE AND THE CARVE-UP OF AFRICA

By Ruth Nhere

This year the world is marking the centenary of the Berlin conference at which the imperialist countries divided up the continent of Africa and shared out the loot amongst themselves. This conference, formally summoned by Portugal but actually initiated by Germany and France, lasted from November 15, 1884, until February 26, 1885. Fourteen European countries and the United States took part in the proceedings. The 'General Act' produced by the conference contained clauses which aimed to lay down the rules governing Europe's 'scramble for Africa'. What created the need for such an accord?

It was the maverick King Leopold of Belgium who was posing the most serious obstacle to the consolidation of territories already held by the major European powers. With the Congo basin under his control, any plan by others to create a unified African Empire was bound to fail. As sovereign master of this huge territory, which separated the west from the east coast of the continent and the southern from the northern regions, Leopold was in a position to prevent contact between regions under the control of any of the other 'great powers'. True, it was possible for any of the other great powers to defeat Leopold with ease, but such a conflict was not in the interests of any of the imperialists at that stage.

The Berlin Conference found a way round this problem. While recognising Leopold's nominal sovereignty over the area, the conference decided that within the Congo Basin "the trade of all nations shall enjoy complete freedom".

The Congo was the priority item on the Berlin Conference agenda, but two more decisions of the conference were incorporated in international law by the General Act: first, 'freedom of navigation' of the Niger and Congo rivers by the signatories was agreed; secondly — and equally important for imperialist expansion — the basis for regulating new occupations of African territory was agreed, laying down the criteria for judging what constituted 'effective occupation' and the mode of setting up a Protectorate by the conquering power.

By the time of the conference the greater part of Africa had already been apportioned between the European powers. Various parts of the West African coast had been occupied by Britain, France and Germany. Southern Africa and a considerable part of East Equatorial Africa were in the hands of Britain and Germany while France and Germany had also seized the coastal regions of West Equatorial Africa. In a number of regions though, most notably Uganda and the Boer Republics in South Africa, the domination of the 'Great Powers' had yet to be established.

Despite a high level of inter-imperialist rivalry, the major European powers were united in their wish to remove a major obstacle to their ability to create contacts between their various possessions. This was 'Leopold's Congo', in the heart of the continent. Breaking the Belgian King's sovereignty would also provide a source of raw materials and a profitable new market. This was essentially what the Berlin Conference was intended to achieve.

The significance of the conference did not, however, lie in its terms of reference. Rather it should be understood as one of the outcomes of a maturing process in the development of capitalist relations in Europe. It clearly pointed to the birth of a new epoch in world history, that of imperialism.

### **The Stage of Monopoly Capitalism**

Lenin's study of imperialism provides the key to an understanding of the forces which gave rise to the convening of the Berlin Conference. He showed that the development of pre-monopoly capital, in which free competition was predominant, reached its limit in the 1860s and 1870s. He wrote:



**"We now see that it is *precisely after that period* that the tremendous 'boom' in colonial conquests begins, and that the struggle for the territorial division of the world becomes extraordinarily sharp. It is beyond doubt, therefore, that capitalism's transition to the stage of monopoly capitalism, to finance capital, is *connected* with the intensification of the struggle for the partitioning of the world".<sup>(1)</sup>**

This delineation of the transition of capitalism to its highest stage is amply demonstrated by the history of Europe's conquest of Africa. Prior to the 1870s, the 'Great Powers' tried to expand their bases on the coast of Africa. Conflicts between them involved individual capitalists or companies acting on their own or enjoying the support of their respective governments. With the shift to imperialism, battles were fought between monopolistic organisations of finance capital represented by the governments of the imperialist powers.

This qualitative change in the nature of Europe's attack on Africa has often been obscured by bourgeois analysts. Lenin's attack on their evaluation retains its validity today:

**"To substitute the question of the form of the struggle and agreements (today peaceful, tomorrow warlike, the next day warlike again) for the question of the *substance* of the struggle and agreements between capitalist associations is to sink to the role of a sophist".<sup>(2)</sup>**

Monopoly companies were formed in Europe with the task of subjecting whole regions of our continent to capitalist exploitation. The German Southwest African Company (1883), the French Compagnie Francaise de l'Afrique Equatoriale (1880), and the British South Africa Company (1889) were just some of the monopolies set up for this purpose. Their operations involved the importing and plundering of African products, the establishment of plantations, speculation in land and the exploitation of mineral resources.

### **In South Africa**

In South Africa, the discovery of diamonds and gold in the 1880s was to establish the region as a vital base of imperialist interests.

**"The transformation began in 1886 ... By the end of the second gold boom of 1895-6, £57m had been invested in the Rand alone ... South Africa for the first time became big business to the British and European merchant and investor..."<sup>(3)</sup>**

British finance capital was thus confronted with a twofold task to secure imperialism's treasure house in Africa. This meant putting an end to the heroic resistance of the African people as well as tackling the Boer Republics. The Act of Union of 1910 signalled the completion of these objectives.

The wealth of the south was a spur to intensified inter-imperialist rivalry throughout the Continent. Aiming to consolidate their empires the 'Great Powers' indulged in the sending of expeditionary forces and involved themselves in all conceivable means of diplomatic warfare. At this stage their disputes took the form of wars of conquest against the independent African peoples.

The specific features of the socio-economic systems of the metropolitan powers gave different forms to their colonial administrations. Monopoly capitalism was to exert its influence on African societies in far-reaching ways. The process, consolidated by the establishment of colonies, involved the subordination of entire economies to the interests and requirements of foreign capital. The arbitrary division of Africa into colonies was carried out with total disregard for the national and cultural traditions of the indigenous inhabitants. Despite the determined resistance of the African people against the colonial oppressors, the social fabric of African life was twisted and distorted to service the needs of international finance capital.

The imperialist offensive could only be countered by organisation on the part of the oppressed nations. Two processes were to have a decisive impact in fulfilling this need. First, the outbreak of the imperialist war in 1914 and secondly the October Revolution of 1917.

Lenin characterised the war as a continuation of the politics of the 'Great Powers' in their bid to plunder and exploit the oppressed peoples.

"This is a war, firstly, to increase the enslavement of the colonies by means of a 'more equitable' distribution and subsequent more concerted exploitation of them;..."<sup>(4)</sup>

Although the battles were fought in Europe he underlined that "the imperialist war has drawn the dependent peoples into world history".<sup>(5)</sup> It did indeed prove an important political school for the African peoples.

It was in the wake of the war, with the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the breaching of international imperialism, that Africa's peoples were to derive the most significant inspiration for the uplifting of their national struggles. The October Revolution concretely revealed the solution of problems which were similar to those suffered by the colonised nations. It shattered the myth of the invincibility of the capitalists and landowners. It proved that dependence on the imperialist states could be broken. Through its decrees on peace and the rights of the peoples of Russia, the young Soviet state turned the Marxist-Leninist principle of the equality of nations and the right of nations to self-determination into law and applied them in practice.

The First World War had aggravated the contradictions between oppressor and oppressed and the post-war redivision of Africa only served to deepen these. Under the 1919 Treaty of Versailles the mandate system was devised and another form of colonial rule emerged whose substance lay in the distribution of mandates for "spoliation and plunder".<sup>(6)</sup> Germany's colonies were divided among the victorious powers. In the process Britain gave her mandate on South West Africa to the Union of South Africa. The Namibian people were thus placed under the control of the white racist minority who already dominated the adjacent territory and its peoples.

While the end of the war led to the increased penetration of the monopolies into almost every aspect of economic life, it also saw the birth of Africa's first working class vanguard parties. In the early 1920s, Communist Parties were formed in South Africa and Egypt and later in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco and Madagascar. This process was accompanied by the growth and spread of national liberation movements. Mass revolutionary actions took place in those countries with a higher degree of socio-economic development, particularly in northern and southern Africa.

### **The Communist International**

These struggles were being waged under new conditions which made possible the beginnings of anti-imperialist unity. The Communist International founded in March 1919 was to provide the organisational framework for gigantic strides in both the theory and practice of national and social revolution. The Comintern's Theses on the National and Colonial Question, drafted by Lenin, broke new ground in this respect. The revisionist and social chauvinist ideology that had infected the social-democratic parties of Europe and had reached its peak during the First World War was emphatically condemned:

"The Communist International breaks once and for all with the traditions of the Second International, for whom in fact only white-skinned people existed. The task of the Communist International is to liberate the working people of the entire world. In its ranks the white, the yellow, and the black-skinned peoples — the working people of the entire world — are fraternally connected".<sup>(7)</sup>

The conception of the development of the world revolution against imperialism was set out on the basis of the close alliance of the Soviet Republic and the working class in the advanced countries with the national liberation movement of the oppressed peoples. The opening of a new epoch, one of the transition of capitalism to socialism, had been immeasurably advanced by the world's first socialist revolution. Lenin with his customary

clarity grasped the substance of this new development in human history and explained the basis for the unity of anti-imperialist forces:

"... in the present world situation following the imperialist war, reciprocal relations between peoples and the world political system as a whole are determined by the struggle waged by a small group of imperialist nations against the Soviet movement and the Soviet states headed by Soviet Russia. Unless we bear that in mind, we shall not be able to pose a single national or colonial problem correctly, even if it concerns a most outlying part of the world."<sup>(6)</sup>

The Comintern was to make a rich contribution towards the elaboration of the strategy and tactics of national liberation struggles. In the longer term its work and the concrete practice of the young Soviet state were to reveal a way of development for the future independent states of Africa — that of socialist orientation. Lenin argued forcefully that it was correct for the Comintern to advance the proposition:

"that with the aid of the proletariat of the advanced countries, backward countries can go over to the Soviet system, and, through certain stages of development, to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage".<sup>(7)</sup>

The national liberation movement was able to make significant advances during the inter-war years. The world economic crisis of 1929-1933 aggravated the contradictions between the colonies and the metropolitan countries. The efforts of foreign monopoly capital to solve the crisis led to heightened exploitation of the African peoples. The economic upheavals of this period sharpened inter-imperialist rivalry by intensifying the struggle for markets, sources of cheap raw materials and spheres of investment.

The Second World War accelerated the dual processes of deepening crisis in the imperialist camp and the strengthening of the anti-imperialist forces. Once again war proved a harsh political school. Roughly one million Africans were mobilised into the armed forces with a further 2 million serving the troops. The war laid bare the contradictions amongst the imperialist powers and at the same time, through the momentous struggle waged by the Soviet people, revealed the strength of socialism. Socialist revolutions in a number of European and Asian countries laid the basis for the establishment of a world socialist system. The irreversible disintegration of the colonial system had begun.

Despite the fine sentiments of the Atlantic Charter of 1941 the imperialist countries limited themselves to promises of constitutional reforms in the colonies after the war. Contrary to the UN Charter (1945) they retained their territories, this time through the trusteeship system. At the same time the flow of foreign investments into Africa continued to increase. The total value of African exports rose from \$1000m in 1938 to \$5440m in 1955.<sup>(10)</sup> This



period also saw the entry into Africa of the USA as imperialism's main military and political force. The US monopolies launched a massive invasion of the continent with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development acting as an important arm of American influence.

### **Advent of Neo-Colonialism**

The intensified activities of the imperialist powers could not, however, prevent an upswing in the national liberation struggle and the birth of Africa's first independent states. But adapting to the new conditions the monopolies were able at this stage to safeguard their basic interests, this time finding a new form of imperialist domination — neo-colonialism.

Western ideologists have constructed a myriad of theories to define the new relationship between Europe and Africa in the post-independence period, hoping to show that with the demise of most of its colonial forms, imperialism had ceased to exist. But the actual experience of the young states under the yoke of neo-colonialism has shown that in this form, too, imperialism retains the export of capital as its most essential economic basis. And it is this basis that continues to account for the economic and financial dependence of African states on foreign industrial, raw material and banking monopolies. The export of capital also remains primarily responsible for ensuring the flow of super-profits to the imperialist powers.

The objective results of neo-colonialism — the maintenance of backwardness and dependence; the plundering of natural and mineral resources; the intensification of exploitation of the working people by the imperialist and local bourgeoisie — have reinforced the growing awareness throughout our continent that capitalism can offer no solution to our problems. Lenin pointed clearly to this inevitable process when he told the Third Congress of the Communist International that

"... in the impending decisive battles in the world revolution, the movement of the majority of the population of the globe, initially directed towards national liberation, will turn against capitalism and imperialism".<sup>(11)</sup>

This strengthened tendency within national liberation revolutions since the 1960s is reflected by those countries of Africa which have chosen the path of socialist orientation. But the advances won in the zone of national liberation throughout the world have goaded the imperialists into launching one of the most dangerous counter-offensives that humanity has thus far

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In the contemporary period we face an imperialism whose inter-relations have qualitatively changed since the years of 'Great Power' rivalry of the



Berlin Conference. As the Soviet scholar K.N. Brutents has shown, although inter-imperialist contradictions still exist, the whole of post-war experience has shown that

“Whenever truly important interests in the contest between socialism and capitalism are affected in the zone of national liberation, whenever the positions of imperialism as a whole are at issue, the imperialists are guided by the considerations of their global anti-socialist, anti-revolutionary strategy, and bend every effort to act in a common front”.<sup>(12)</sup>

### **Offensive Against Africa**

Utilising subtle neo-colonialist policies, imperialism attempts to continue its expansionist policies. On a world scale the United States staged armed interventions or threatened military force on 215 occasions between 1946 and 1975.<sup>(13)</sup> In Africa, the imperialists are following the same course. Reagan's policy of 'constructive engagement' with the apartheid regime has created the conditions for intense military, economic and political pressure being brought to bear throughout the whole region of Southern Africa. Those countries which have chosen the way of socialist orientation have become the prime targets of imperialism's counter-offensive.

Imperialist policy is not confined to the Reagan brand. It is instructive to remember that the monopolies of the so-called 'Contact Group of 5', which has involved itself in the question of Namibian independence, account for 70% of investments in that country's mining industry. The Social Democrats, too, have not been inactive. A 'Socialist African International' held its founding congress in Tunis in 1980, and the ideology and strategy of Social Democracy are clearly reflected in that organisations's Charter which emphatically "rejects the concept of class struggle," which, it maintains, is "at variance with both the traditional structures of African society and its history".<sup>(14)</sup>

The current imperialist offensive aims to undercut the commitment of African countries and the OAU to the policy of non-alignment and to break all forms of cooperation with the socialist countries. The most dangerous development of this policy has been the involvement of some African countries, notably the Sudan, Egypt and Kenya, in US military policy, the establishment of military bases on their territory and the deployment of US arms there.

The aggressive nature of imperialism's foreign policy springs from the very nature of its economic and social relations and the interests of its ruling classes. As Lenin wrote:

"Imperialism is the epoch of finance capital and monopolies, which introduce everywhere the striving for domination, not for freedom".<sup>(15)</sup>

Despite the violence and force that imperialism displays in its counter-offensive (eg Grenada), the change in the world balance of forces in favour of national and social emancipation is irrevocable. In Africa, communists and revolutionary democrats are reaching higher levels of organisational and ideological unity in their common anti-imperialist struggle. The African revolutionaries are on the one hand the recipients of the all-round support of the socialist countries, but have in turn helped to consolidate the positions of world socialism and advance and influence the world revolutionary process as a whole.

The consequences of 100 years of imperialism for Africa remain painfully apparent in a continent where the extreme impoverishment of the rural and urban masses testifies to the ravages of imperialist plunder. In this centenary year of the Berlin Conference, however, we are also able to record the developing and central struggle waged by the African peoples for national and social emancipation and for a just and equitable world economic order. The past 100 years have witnessed the growth and consolidation of the mighty alliance of world-anti-imperialist forces. We can face the future with confidence. As the late Comrade Yusuf Dadoo, National Chairman of the SACP, emphasised:

"Success in the battles against imperialism are being scored today because of the growing might of existing socialism and the consistent peace policy pursued by the socialist community; the united action by the international working class and communist movement, and the new and major anti-imperialist drive by the liberated countries. Extensive interaction and joint efforts by all these forces are the guarantee that the major achievements in the revolutionary liberation struggle will be firmly consolidated in the new decade"<sup>(16)</sup>

#### Footnotes

1. V.I. Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol 1 p 691
2. V.I. Lenin, *Selected Works* Vol 1 p 689
3. Robinson & Gallagher, *Africa & the Victorians*, 1978, p 210
4. V.I. Lenin, *Socialism & War*, Progress 1975, p 14
5. V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 31, p 232
6. V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 30, p 159
7. R.P. Dutt, *The Internationale*, 1964 p 162/3
8. V I Lenin, *Selected Works*, Vol 3 p 405/6
9. V I Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol 31, p 244
10. *A History of Africa 1918-1967*, Moscow 1968 p 16
11. V I Lenin, *Collected Works* Vol 32 p 482
12. K N Brutents, *National Liberation Revolutions Today*, Vol 1, Progress 1977, p 54
13. *World Marxist Review*, Vol 24, 1, 81 p 7
14. *World Marxist Review*, Vol 24, 9, 81 p 53
15. V I Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol 22, p 297
16. *World Marxist Review*, Vol 24, 81, 5, p 37

# **DOCUMENTS**

## **THE POLITICAL BALANCE IN EGYPT**

**THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN EGYPT WAS ANALYSED BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE EGYPTIAN COMMUNIST PARTY AT A MEETING HELD IN JANUARY 1984. THE FOLLOWING ARE EXTRACTS FROM THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AFTER THE MEETING:**

Having made an extensive study of the course of events around the world, in the region of the Middle East and within Egypt in the period since its last meeting in May 1982, and of the effects — both positive and negative — of these developments upon the national liberation movement as a whole and upon the Egyptian patriotic and progressive movement; paying particular attention to the impact of these developments on the political situation in 1984 and the emerging trends at the local, regional and worldwide levels; the Central Committee of the Egyptian Communist Party, meeting at the end of January 1984, draws attention to certain central features of the political situation, with a view to providing for a greater understanding of the pattern of events over the coming months.

## **I — Spontaneous Strikes and Mobilizations**

In the course of this year, Egypt is certain to experience a whole series of spontaneous strikes and upheavals, which will inevitably have an impact on the politics of our country, in view of the following conditions:

- the deepening economic and social crisis, together with the absence of democratic channels for free expression and political change, resulting from the policies of the parasitic capitalism which holds the reins of government and of the ruling National Democratic Party;
- the anger and indignation felt amongst the working class;
- the role of our Party, which remains illegal, and of certain legally-recognized patriotic and democratic bodies, in support of the organized activity and initiative of the popular masses in their efforts to seize their democratic rights and defend their social and economic interests.

These spontaneous strikes and uprisings, and their effects on the entire political life of Egypt, are thus inevitable and inescapable.

It is our duty to be well aware of this situation. We must not simply allow these mass movements to develop in a haphazard and makeshift fashion; that would only lead to an intensification of police repression, the curtailment of democratic rights, the rounding up and defeat of the progressive and democratic forces. Let us bear in mind the lessons of the popular revolt in Egypt on 18-19 January, 1977.

Our Party, and all of our cadres, in every part of the country and in every sector, must work assiduously amongst the popular masses and the toiling classes: the workers, peasants and students. We must take our place in the forefront of their movement and assure them of our support in the struggle to secure the democratic rights of the people — foremost among them the right to strike, the right to occupy workplaces and to demonstrate freely.

That is the only way to ensure that such strikes and mass mobilizations against the ruling circles can become an effective means of seizing democratic, economic and social rights, rather than simply a courageous confrontation which puts some pressure on the government but fails to secure genuine long-term advances.

## **II — The Parliamentary Elections**

Political parties, groups and tendencies have been fighting the Electoral Law on Conditional Proportional Representation, a law devised by the ruling National Democratic Party to suit its own ends. This battle has just ended, with the government successfully defending the said Law and the legally-recognised opposition (the Socialist Labour Party, the Liberal-Socialist

Party, the Patriotic Rally Party, the Progressive Unionist Party, the Nation Party and the Wafd or Neo-Wafd Party) agreeing to take part in the forthcoming parliamentary elections. Nonetheless, these parties are still fighting for guarantees of free and fair elections and for changes in the law, though there is as yet no evidence that the government might give in to these demands.

In this respect, the government is merely following the course dictated by its own circumstances. In effect, the ruling parasitic capitalism finds itself with no way out. The economic and social crisis continues to deteriorate. The living standards of the majority of the people are steadily dwindling; the only people to escape are those classes and strata linked to foreign capital and benefitting from the "open doors" policy towards imperialist capital. In these conditions, it is reasonable to expect that if the forthcoming elections were to take place with the slightest degree of fair play, honesty and freedom, the ruling party and the parasitic capitalists would face the loss of the electoral majority which they managed to contrive in 1979.

The willingness of these other political parties to take part in these elections, on the government's terms, and in accordance with the existing legislation, has led to a break-up of the consensus which had formerly been established among them through the Committee of Patriotic Parties and Forces for the Defence of Democracy. But the battle is not yet over.

Given these conditions, we may draw out three main aims for our Party's work in the course of this struggle.

(1) We must add our weight to the efforts to maintain the unity of the opposition forces, even in the event of their deciding to run separately and against each other in the elections. Our approach will favour an agreement among the parties to include certain points in their electoral programmes, while respecting the right of each party to present its own distinctive platform. The common points for inclusion in each programme are as follows: (a) the basic democratic demands outlined in the manifesto of the Committee of Patriotic Parties and Forces for the Defence of Democracy — in particular, the repeal of the Electoral Law, the restoration of political rights, the annulment of the Law on Political Parties and of the emergency laws, the laws restricting civil liberties, and of all unconstitutional laws; recognition of the right to strike, the right to occupy workplaces, and the right to demonstrate freely; and the abolition of the Consultative Assembly and the Higher Press Council. (b) Acknowledgement of various social rights, especially the right to free medical care and medicines; educational rights; protection for the rights of tenants and small businessmen; protection for



workers against unfair dismissal and against any reduction of their rights in the so-called investment societies. (c) The defence of Egypt's independence, the rejection of any form of American military presence, refusal to submit to economic blackmail and opposition to Israeli hegemonism.

(2) We must concentrate our efforts on three objectives: (a) attacking the Electoral Law and undermining it in the course of the campaign; exposing the interference by the government and the civil service, and highlighting the possibility of ballot-rigging; (b) denouncing the policies of parasitic capitalism, its advocates and representatives in the ruling National Democratic Party; (c) encouraging the other political parties to identify as best they can with the hardships suffered by the masses.

(3) We must put forward some of our own Party members for election to the Popular Assembly.

### **III — New Forces on the Political Scene**

Three new forces have lately emerged on the political scene. Our Party takes a different view of each one. They are, firstly: the Wafd (or "neo-Wafd"), which has just gained legal recognition; secondly, the Independent Nasserites, who have been increasingly active and are building up contacts with other forces; and thirdly, the Muslim Brotherhood.

1: The Wafd — Our attitude towards this party is guided by four inter-related considerations: (a) our consistent and unshakeable principle of support for the right of every political force to form its own party. We will continue to uphold this right, whatever the circumstances. (b) By and large, the Wafd presents itself as a force parallel to the ruling National Democratic Party. It is not an opposition force as such, notwithstanding the presence of factions and tendencies within it which criticise and actually oppose the ruling party and the policies it follows. The Wafd concentrates on invoking its past record of liberalism (albeit a somewhat limited liberalism) and appeals mainly to the social strata which predominate in its leadership: the local bourgeoisie, both the parasitic and productive types; the so-called liberal professions; and some intellectual groups. But the petty-bourgeoisie is not among the Wafd's followers; it tends to lean more towards the left. The Wafd, then, is likely to favour the preservation of the existing regime, though perhaps with a more democratic flavour; less corruption, strong ties with the United States (although under a different form), and a general line of anti-communism and opposition to the popular movement. (c) We must certainly pay close attention to the struggle developing within the Wafd, supporting the wing which fights against the Camp David deals, against dependence on the USA

and in favour of co-operation with the patriotic opposition. (d) Whatever line the Wafd adopts, our main adversary continues to be the ruling National Democratic Party.

2: The Nasserites — Our attitude towards the Nasserites remains one of defending their right to exist as a political party. Our relations with their main force, as a component of the social forces which support progress and socialism, are of fundamental value. For our part, we must take a sympathetic view of their hostile attitude towards the Wafd, as a force which opposed the July Revolution. Our alliance with the Nasserites in the electoral campaign is essential, as a means of furthering the unity of the patriotic and progressive opposition forces.

3: The Muslim Brotherhood — As for the Muslim Brothers: their leaders maintain close contacts with the government (Prime Minister Fouad Mohie El Dine and Interior Minister Hassan Abou Bacha), and their activities are mainly organised through the Wafd. Nonetheless, there are amongst them some who are willing to co-operate with the progressive opposition, and in particular the Patriotic Rally Party and the Progressive Unionists.

It is essential to mobilize against the efforts of the enemies of the Palestinian revolution, the Arab liberation movement and the Egyptian patriotic and democratic forces.

We must step up the struggle against the Camp David line and face up to American aggression against the Arab nation, whether this be pursued by direct aggression of the kind suffered by the people and the national movement in Lebanon, by large-scale military presence on Arab territory and off Arab coasts, by military bases and facilities such as those granted to the multinational forces in Sinai, or by the installation of US missiles in Europe and in Israel.

**The Central Committee Resolves to instruct the Political Bureau:**

1) to draw up and publish a detailed study of the situation on the Palestinian scene;

2) to decide how many Party cadres shall take part in the election campaign.

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**LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**  
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## **OUR ARMED STRUGGLE PORTRAYED IN FICTION**

From T.

Dear Editor,

Although your reviewer of Hilda Bernstein's novel *Death is Part of the Process* (AC No 96, 1st Quarter 1984) states that at the time of the book's action — circa 1961 — he was not yet born, he raises a number of interesting points about its action and its characters. These seem to one who *was* born — and who participated in a small way in some of the events — to need comment. It is not my intention to enter into discussion of the literary merits of the book, or of M.F.'s review; readers can make up their own minds. But the book is, as far as I know, the first attempt to deal seriously (in the form of fiction) with the beginnings of armed struggle against the South African state, with which the whole of the South African liberation movement is now fully identified.

It is important, therefore, that its political interpretation of people and events is not passed over too easily. For in those events — and in the revelations of the character of some of the people who made a part of our history — there are important lessons to be learnt, not least by those who did not participate in them, but need to carry their experience into today's revolutionary activities.

One of the experiences of that time — doubtless being repeated today — is that revolutionaries were not all perfect people, flawless, heroic and incorruptible — much as we would have liked them to be. Some were. Perhaps more were than one would find amongst any other cross-section of the population, because the high idealism and brotherhood of the revolutionary cause rubs off; it inspires revolutionaries to selflessness and self-sacrifice greatly different from the self-seeking 'what's-in-it-for-me' corruption of the society we live in.

But still some revolutionaries are less than perfect, and some are deeply flawed. It is as necessary to understand that today as it was in 1961 when we had not had the opportunity to learn from our experience. Some active participants in the revolutionary struggle — like the Sipho of the book — did turn informer to save their own skins; and some shepherded off many of their erstwhile comrades to the jails and torture chambers. We have our heroes — many of them; but we also have our Bruno Mtolos and Bartholomew Hlapanes and Piet Beylevelds. Today's revolutionaries dare not let revolutionary romanticism blind them to the facts of what *did* happen; and what can surely happen again.

Your reviewer would have liked the book to deal more with the way decisions were made at the time in the upper ranks of the movement, in the High Command; and about the participation, for example, of Mandela and others. One day, no doubt, books about this — both fact and fiction — will be written; but only when it is no longer dangerous to our movement or today's revolutionaries to disclose what must still be "classified" information.

Hilda Bernstein's book deals not with those at the very centre of the Umkhonto we Sizwe organisation, or at the centre of the ANC or Communist Party. It deals with a group which starts on the fringes — in a university-based "human rights committee" — which gets sucked into the fringes of revolutionary action by a government clamp-down on a fairly innocuous, and open, protest demonstration. This group of non-revolutionary origins is drawn closer and closer to the real revolutionary core which constantly needs technical aides, assistants and allies in the "legitimate" world outside their own ranks. Of these aides and allies, some are romantic revolutionaries, like Pila, still with one foot in her bourgeois white milieu and with a less-than-revolutionary flawed consciousness, expressed — as your reviewer notes — in the idea that being arrested somehow "earned" a badge of honour, and in the feeling that "I" have done this for "them". Others develop differently as they move into underground activity — Dick into hopelessness and retreat under the pressure of arrest; and his wife Marge, from an onlooker and outsider, into an activist of courage.

In fact, as those who were there at the time will know, our movement had experience of all developments. The revolutionary movement proved to be a magnet for many; a source of real growth and strength for some that it attracted, but also too fierce and testing a challenge for others.

If I may take issue with your reviewer on one point, it is on the appraisal of the short-lived sexual encounter between one of the revolutionary core,

Indris, black, and the emerging white activist Marge. Your reviewer writes: "The novel seems to suggest that racial consciousness (in Marge) could be alleviated if not destroyed by a casual act of sexual intercourse." I think not. The sex — short-lived though it is, for reasons over which neither of the parties can have any control — is not casual; it is deliberate and deeply felt. It reveals, I would suggest, not that sex alleviates racial consciousness, but that in the context in which it occurs, it is a watershed in the replacement of race consciousness with a non-racial revolutionary consciousness.

Be that as it may, nothing can alter the fact that this book represents the first serious attempt by someone *inside* our movement to portray the reality of the beginnings of today's politics, not through history but through historically accurate fiction. It needs to be treated seriously, by those who were there at the time no less than by those who were not and yet must pick up the traces.

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## THE SOUTH KOREAN AIRPLANE INCIDENT

From ANC Khumalo

Dear Editor,

Your editorial comment on the South Korean airline incident (*African Communist* 1st Quarter 1984) began: "Whatever mistakes may have been made on the Soviet side....", leaving it to the reader's imagination to determine what those unstated "mistakes" were. Most of your readers in South Africa and on our continent were subject to biased Western versions of the event.

It is patently clear that the South Korean airliner was on an espionage mission for the CIA, overflying an extremely sensitive area of the Soviet Union. For over two hours it flew 500 km off course over the Kamchatka Peninsula, Sea of Okhotsk and Sakhalin Island. A glance at a map will show the strategic importance of the area. The USA and her Japanese ally, which covets the Soviet Kuril island chain enclosing the Okhotsk Sea, aim to hem the Soviet Pacific fleet within this sea in the event of a Third World War. There are consequently numerous Soviet military installations and bases in the



area and Soviet defence forces are on full alert to defend Soviet territory. All foreign vessels and planes have been warned to keep away from this strategic military area and this warning is carried on international navigational charts. Warnings or not, it has of course been the practice of the USA to carry out provocative spy missions against Soviet territory, in order to obtain reconnaissance data and test the Soviet defence system. The Gary Powers U2 spy flight was perhaps the most notorious example of this policy but it has since materialised that French and South Korean civil airlines have been party to the CIA's dirty tricks.

The Soviet defence force had no way of knowing the South Korean flight carried civilian passengers. It was intercepted on a sneak night flight during poor visibility by Soviet fighter planes who repeatedly ordered it to identify itself and land — all to no avail. In the eyes of those Soviet defenders, guarding the security of their frontier and people, the intruder plane was either on a spy mission or even a potential nuclear attacker. At a time of Reagan warmania the latter possibility can never be ruled out. It would have been a dereliction of duty, a betrayal of vigilance, had the Soviet interceptor planes stood idly by. In fact, given the same set of circumstances no alert defence force in the world would have ignored such an intruder. Yet the Soviet Union did not go in "guns blazing" the moment the intruder appeared on the radar screens. A great deal of restraint was exercised. Two hours is a mighty long time in military terms. In all that time not a murmur from USA or Japanese air control which was monitoring the South Korean flight; no information to the Soviet side that the intruder was a civilian flight!

The Soviet Union, a leading force for peace and humanity, deeply regretted the loss of civilian life. The action it took was inevitable in the circumstances, tantamount to a sentry guarding a key object, firing in the dark at a sinister intruder who fails to identify himself. The blood of the innocent victim, callously used by Reagan and the CIA as pawns in a game of death, stains the hands of Washington and not the Soviet Union.

What was the error committed by the Soviet Union? If they received bad publicity in the West that is hardly their fault.

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# **REVIEWS**

## **THE FASCIST LOGIC BEHIND BOTHA'S REFORMS**

**The Rise of the South African Security Establishment: An Essay on the Changing Locus of State Power, Kenneth W. Grundy** South African Institute of International Affairs, August 1983. Bradlow Series No 1 39pp

Grundy is a North American academic who, it seems, frequently visits South Africa and, as this pamphlet makes clear, is no Marxist. His conception of state power and its 'changing locus' is unrelated to the economically based clout of a ruling class and he is anxious to 'save' the South African state through a restructuring exercise which apparently falls somewhat short of the demands of the Freedom Charter. Indeed, Grundy counts himself among those who have 'genuine moral and philosophical misgivings about South Africa's system' but are not (what a 'balanced' 'liberal' approach!) prepared 'to participate in a crusade or even in economic activities to undermine the Republic'. Moreover, although he questions official propaganda about a Soviet-inspired 'onslaught of Marxism', he ludicrously depicts Soviet policy in southern Africa as a 'mirror image' of the destabilising activities of the apartheid regime as though forging solidarity with the liberation movement is (that fair-minded 'liberal balance' again) just as reprehensible as seeking to sabotage them!

Nevertheless, despite its right wing orientation, Grundy's analysis of the South African 'security establishment' is instructive, not least because it

actually *enhances* the case for economic sanctions and the international boycott and in fact undermines Grundy's own implied preference for a reformist alternative to democratic revolution.

Grundy's argument is that the South African Defence Forces (SADF) have moved to the centre of political power and stand at the heart of a 'security establishment' which embraces the police, the intelligence community, many academics along with para-statal corporations like Armscor and their economic subcontractors. This establishment does not merely implement policy, it makes it and its vehicle is the State Security Council: the most import of the five cabinet committees in the Botha government.

Not only has expenditure on the military massively escalated since 1962, but since the late 1970s, the SADF have become, Grundy argues, increasingly preoccupied with 'strategic planning'. With the demise of Vorster, military men have been given a much more central role to play in decision making as part of P.W. Botha's drive for greater efficiency, professionalism, coordination and coherence within the state machinery. Power has been centralised and Botha has drawn upon the contacts he developed as Minister of Defence to inject into government the kind of 'energetic' managerial elitism he had encountered and encouraged in the SADF.

In addition to streamlining the cabinet committee system, Botha has downgraded the Department of Foreign Affairs and Information (notorious in the Vorster period for its slush funds and slovenly administration). The Security Police and particularly the Department of Military Intelligence have largely supplanted General van den Bergh's old BOSS organisation and civil servants and public officials, specialists from the universities, industry and institutes of research have been used to insulate government from pressures from the white parliament, the Nationalist party and 'grass roots' white opinion. As Grundy puts it, a 'paternalistic, centralist regime' is imposing a '*verligte* dictatorship' upon what some right-wing Afrikaner nationalists like to think of as 'democracy for the Herrenvolk'.

### **Total Strategy**

Central to the emergence of this new 'Executive state' is the conception of a 'total strategy' to resist a 'total onslaught'. The military interest extends well beyond conventionally defined military matters and 'virtually everything', foreign or domestic, becomes a fitting subject for state policy and guidance. A war on all fronts demands a 'co-ordinated, holistic, counter-revolutionary strategy'. The battle on the borders must tie in with what Malan calls the

battle on the 'second front' (i.e. against the black population within South Africa). 'Military planning' — the notion of 'area defence' with its provision for rapid military call-ups on a selective basis; the designation of particular locations as 'key points' so that factories may have to store weapons and communications equipment in the event of 'attack' — is to be integrated into 'economic planning' as private companies enter into a 'partnership' with the state to provide technical expertise and research information on security matters. Tenders from Armscor (tenth largest arms manufacturer in the world) touch practically every sector of South African industry and the military insist that 'sensitive' information with regard to sources of supply, levels of production and trading links remain secret.

What is happening, as Grundy puts it, is that the private economic sector has become committed to what can be justifiably regarded as a 'military-industrial complex'. Not much of a role here, it would seem, for the 'liberalising' influence of EEC-type 'codes of practice'!

The State Security Council as a powerful cabinet within the cabinet sees the need not only to militarize the economy, but to militarize society in general. White education places increased emphasis on security 'consciousness' and paramilitary discipline; professionally handled press liaison and public relations bodies monitor the media to ensure that the military are projected in the most favourable possible light and Grundy also notes a tendency to make covert entries into 'partisan politics' in order to discredit other white political parties, spread disinformation in labour disputes and veto decisions taken in other branches of the administration. Grundy instances as examples of growing military influence the reversal of the decision to turn District 6 in Cape Town back to a Coloured group area and the way in which the land deal was floated with the Swaziland government in 1982.

But perhaps the most significant aspect of all of the 'deepening militarization' of the economy, education and society is the fact that it provides the real context for an evaluation of Botha's 'reforms'. It is, as Grundy notes, 'one vital aspect of the counter-revolutionary strategy' that proposals should be introduced which revise 'the trappings of apartheid without tampering with the essentials'. In other words, if militarization is to be effective, it must also involve a philosophy of 'winning hearts and minds' (with the appropriate acronym WHAM).

The Civic Action programme, for example, trains national servicemen to perform as teachers, doctors, engineers, administrators, agricultural specialists etc. to work in Namibia, the Bantustans and other sensitive areas



so that 'cultivating goodwill' neatly dovetails with the task of gathering intelligence. In short, the 'reform' strategy is an integral part of the military strategy — Operation Apartheid Face-lift. The 'changes' are not — as right wingers like to imagine in the West — modest steps in a 'liberal' direction: they are the carefully presented propagandist manoeuvres of a garrison state.

Botha is alleged while still Minister of Defence to have received a memorandum from some of the SADF general staff implying 'that some form of military takeover might be necessary to bring about socio-political changes' and the link between the two is all revealing. A coherent 'total strategy' means, as Grundy puts it delicately, 'imposing marginal (though symbolically significant) reforms on a constituency that resists' i.e. acts of 'homeland consolidation', forays into 'multi-racial' sport for overseas consumption, constitutional changes etc. which the 'herrenvolk democrats' may not like. The real face of these 'reforms' emerges, however, in the military opposition to the Namibian settlement; wrecking the economy of southern Angola and terrorising its people; massacres at Matola and Maseru and of course the tortures, executions, shootings and the dumping which continues at home. The fact that the 'brown shirts' (the 'populists' whom Hitler eventually liquidated) in the shape of the HNP or the Conservative Party may squeal about the '*verligte* dictatorship' merely serves to confirm the inherently fascist logic of the apartheid regime.

JAH

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